

THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

Verse By Verse Bible Studies

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TO KNOW AND KNOW YOU KNOW

A Study Guide
To
The Epistles of John

Volume II

By

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DEDICATION

To

Roy Hamblin

My Friend

FOREWORD

As noted in Volume I of this study, the First Epistle of John is one of my favorite books in the Bible. I love the Gospel According to John because of the evangelistic emphasis. John was inspired to write the Fourth Gospel, not simply to provide an update to the accounts already written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Synoptic Gospels (seeing alike), but to be sure that both Jews and Gentiles would know how they might know Jesus personally. The First Epistle of John was written to provide true believers with assurance of their salvation - that we may know that we know Him.

I am doing something in the two volumes that I have never done in any other study, which includes verse by verse studies on various books of the Bible (some 30 volumes). Some I have developed into commentaries, others need a lot of work. For that reason, I think of these studies simply as my Bible notebook, or THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK. Some 24 or 25 volumes may be found in the Pastor-Life.com website, along with over 150 sermon manuscripts (THE SERMON NOTEBOOK). Pastor-Life.com is the creation of Dr. Mike Minnix of the Georgia Baptist Convention. Dr. Minnix has made a commitment to make available to pastors and teachers a vast library of resources free of charge. In this study, for the first time, I will blend THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK AND THE SERMON NOTEBOOK, with certain changes to condense THE SERMON NOTEBOOK to some extent.

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR. As stated in the introduction to Volume I of this study in the Epistles of John, it is assumed that the author was John, brother of James, son of Zebedee, the same apostle who wrote the Gospel According to John and the Revelation. At the time these epistles were written John was well advanced in years, having outlived all the other apostles and Paul by many years. He is affectionately known now as the Elder John or John the Evangelist. There is something else that is significant: John was the apostle Jesus left to stand in the gap between the Apostolic Age and the next era in the growth of the church.

There would be many controversies, as there are today: and we have the complete New Testament. John survived all the other apostles by some thirty years, during which time the Lord had one man on earth with full apostolic authority to teach His Word, to affirm the truth, and to correct error. One can imagine that twenty, thirty, or possibly even fifty years after his death, an issue was settled when someone said, "I was just a young man then, but I clearly remember when the Elder John taught gave us the answer to that question."

The fact that John outlived Peter, James, Andrew, and Paul was no fluke of nature, no testimony to the genetic code, or simply an oversight by the enemies of the Gospel. After Jesus had told Peter to feed His sheep, He told him that he would become a martyr for the cause of the Gospel. Simon Peter did what a child might well do in any situation in which he believes his parents are being unfair. He

looks to a sibling and demands, “But what about him?!!!”

So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them. [That disciple] was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, “Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray You?” When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord what about him?”

“If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow Me.”

So this report spread to the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “**If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?**” (John 21:20-23,HCSB).

It was no accident that John was kept alive to write the Gospel of John (around A. D. 86), the Epistles of John (around A. D. 88-90), or the Revelation (about A. D 96). John was inspired to write Scripture that answered a lot of questions that had remained unanswered to that point. There would be a gap in our understanding of the new birth in Christ, assurance of salvation, and assurance that the future is in the Lord’s hands.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING: The epistles were probably written around A.D. 85 - 95. (possibly 88-90). John reportedly spent the last years of his life at Ephesus, except for the exile on Patmos. He was probably at Ephesus when he wrote the epistles.

PURPOSE AND OCCASION: The epistles were written to deal with specific difficulties that threatened the church. A.T. Robertson said that the epistles were written for the edification of readers in the truth and the life in Christ. “Yet,” he says, “the errors of the Gnostics were constantly before John’s mind. John warns believers about false teachers. The false teachers against whom he wrote were Antinomian Gnostics, Gnosticism grew out of Greek philosophy and by the time John wrote these letters many Christians had been confused by the heresy” [A. T. Robertson, WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, The Bible Navigator Electronic Bible Library, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, TN, a creation of Tim Vineyard, VP over the technology division. As a trustee I had the privilege of voting to establish this department and name Tim Vineyard to his post]. The Gnostics got their name from the Greek word *Agnosis*” which means knowledge. To them the key to salvation was knowledge. The Gnostics:

- 1) Separated the Father from the Son.
- 2) Denied the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Held a dualistic view of the world.
- 4) Insisted that salvation came from secret knowledge B learning a certain theories about the creation and about Jesus.
- 5) Insisted that sin was powerless over their lives, and to prove it they boasted of their indulgence in immoral acts.

As noted in Volume I, the author gives believers a series of **nine tests for knowing the truth** B each time using the verb “to know” (*gnosis*):

1) 2:3 - “This is **how we are sure** that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands.”

2) 2:5 - “But whoever keeps His word, **truly in him the love of God is perfected.**”

3) 3:16 - “This is **how we have come to know love**: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.”

4) 3:18-20 - “Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth; **that is how we will know we are of the truth**, and will convince our hearts in His presence, 20 because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.”

5) 3:24 - “The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And **the way we know** that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.”

6) 4:2 - “**This is how you know the Spirit of God**: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

7) 4:6 - “We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. **From this we know the Spirit of truth** and the spirit of deception.”

8) 4:13 - “**This is how we know** that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit.”

9) 5:2 - “**This is how we know** that we love God’s children when we love God and obey His commands.”

This is absolutely amazing! Our Lord leaves nothing to chance or discovery. He tells us over and over in the Gospel of John how to be saved. Now, in 1 John, He tells us over and over how we may know that we know Him.

Practically every thought in 1 John is found in the Gospel. Compare the prologue to the Gospel with the first four verses of this Epistle. The First Epistle is a letter which may have been addressed to any New Testament church but was not. Some have referred to it as a “to whom it may concern” letter.

POINT TO REMEMBER: The purpose given for the Gospel of John is found in John 20:30-31: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so **that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,**

the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. The purpose in 1 John is given in 2:3: “By this **we know that we have come to know Him**, if we keep His commandments.” The Lord wants you to know Him and He wants you to know that you know Him.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOTE: As in Volume One, this study combines a study on the First Epistle of John in THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK with a series of 31 sermons from *The Sermon Notebook* on the epistle, which may be found on the PastorLife website. I have pasted in the sermons at appropriate place in the outlined study which I prepared before I came up with *The Bible Notebook* plan, and before I began expanding the my earlier 20 - 30 page outlines with notes to much larger studies. I call my collection *The Bible Notebook* because more work is needed on most of them before I would consider them commentaries. The only commentary I have had published was the self-published, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*, a commentary on Philippians. Rather than outline the entire book, I follow the chapters and then outline each chapter separately.

I. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH CONTRASTED WITH THE SPIRIT OF ERROR, 4:1-6.

4:1 - TEST THE SPIRITS. “*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” This is not only good advice for any age, it is a specific instruction from God. In every age, Christians must not “believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God.” Through Jeremiah and other prophets, God warns of false prophets and evil spirits.

Paul gives a formula to help us know who is a Christian: “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, >Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

We must test the spirits of Islam, Mormonism, New Age gods, animism, and divergent teaching and preaching from mainline or well known churches and denominations - evangelicals and Catholics. Popular preaching in the early part of the Twentieth Century might well have been labeled hell fire and brimstone preaching. Those who attended demanded that the preacher “step on my toes.” Of course, they didn’t mean it. If you stepped on their toes they went somewhere else. What they wanted was someone to step on their neighbor’s toes!

Today, popular preaching may well avoid mention of sin, repentance, lostness, or hell. As one very popular young preacher says, “I just want people to feel good.” The sad thing is that there are a lot of preachers who seem determined to give people what they want. God used Jeremiah to condemn such preachers in his day. If He condemned lying prophets 600 years before Christ, why should we think He would be pleased with them today.

Once some televangelists discovered how they could use television, there was a fresh need to apply this verse and test the spirits. Many of us discovered that television gave the TV preacher a stamp of authenticity and no matter what he said many of our people accepted their word over that of their pastor. There have been many outstanding preachers on television, from the late Adrian Rogers, to Charles Stanley, to James Kennedy. There have been others who will not be named here, but whose message needed to be tested scripturally and prayerfully.

This is another reason the person in the pew needs to hear expository preaching on a regular basis. How can he test the spirits if he does not know the Word of God? The Berean saints searched the Scriptures daily to see if Paul was preaching the truth. That is the best way to test the spirits.

4:2 - HOW YOU KNOW. “ *This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*” In the previous verse, we are told to test the spirits. In this verse, John expands the instructions to tell us how we may distinguish the Spirit of God from a false spirit. This is vital: the Spirit of God confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh - which the Gnostics denied. That was the issue of the day and the Lord inspired John to answer the Gnostic heresy, both here and in the Gospel According to John. As a matter of fact, the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel destroys the basic tenets of Gnosticism. Furthermore, since modern New Age movements have their roots in ancient Gnosticism, the Scripture gives us the answer to modern heresies and false religions today.

Any spirit that questions the Jesus of Scripture is of the devil. Anyone who acknowledges the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is from God. When Peter made his great confession, Jesus not only commended him, He stated very clearly that Simon Peter did not figure this out on his own. It was revealed unto Him by the Father. You may read about the birth of Jesus and the Scripture that tells us Jesus came in the flesh, but it is only through the revelation of the Father that we can be totally convinced of the truth. This faith is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

4:3 - SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST. “ *But every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now.*” Anyone who denies that Jesus came in the flesh is an antichrist. John is not saying that the false teachers are uninspired; what he is saying is that their inspiration comes from the devil. This is a repetition of the point already made in 2:18-25.

Brannon Howse (*One Nation Under Man*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 2005) quotes poles by the Barna Group that should shock evangelical Christians. For example, their 2004 studies showed that “Even among those who consider themselves >born-again Christians’ or >evangelicals,’ many say they don’t believe in a literal Satan, hell, Holy Spirit, or absolute moral truth for all people, places, and times” (p. 179). In their study it was discovered that 51% of unchurched people believe that when Jesus lived on earth He committed sins (IBID, p. 179). That the spirit of antichrist would so influence the unchurched is a sad commentary on what has happened in America over the past century. That professing believers would question the Incarnation, the reality of Satan and the Holy Spirit is indicative of the apostasy that is going on in the church today. That is the spirit of antichrist.

Howse, founder and president of World View Weekend Conferences, quotes John H. Dietrich, a Unitarian minister and a signatory of *Humanist Manifesto*, who wrote, “There has grown up within the liberal churches in America a very definite movement known as Humanism, which is seeking to ground religion in human living rather than in some supernatural existence, by interpreting the good life in terms of human values and by directing man’s Delete Duplicate aspirations toward enhancement of human like” (IBID, p. 184). That is the spirit of antichrist!

On October 10, 2006, Bill O’Reilly had as a guest on his nightly program, *The O’Reilly Factor*, the Rev. Barry Lynn, president of *Americans United for Separation of Church and State*. The Rev. Barry Lynn has for many years carried on a passionate crusade against almost everything the Founding Fathers advocated. He strongly opposes any display of the Ten Commandments on the grounds that if an atheist should pass by and look at the display it might hurt his feelings. On the most recent O’Reilly appearance, Lynn’ target was traditional marriage. He strongly opposes letting the states decide for themselves what constitutes a marriage, regardless of the strong percentage of citizen that vote to declare marriage a union between one man and one woman. He believes the state should stay out of it and let individuals decide. It was pointed out to him that each person did decide when he cast his or her vote. That does not satisfy the Rev. Barry Lynn, who wants ours to be a “progressive secular” society. When a man who claims to be a minister of God advocates anti-Christian positions I wonder if I am listening to a spirit of antichrist. The Lord strongly condemned lying prophets and unfaithful priests through His prophet Jeremiah.

4:4 - YOU HAVE CONQUERED. “*You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*” There will be times when it seems the believer is swamped by the world. Christians and Jews today face an enemy in Islam that seems so overpowering that it is useless to resist it. Israel knows they must defeat Islam or be destroyed. Europe is capitulating step by step and day by day to the evil we know as Islamic Fascism, and a large segment of our society in America thinks we can compromise with evil. The point John makes here is that the One who is in us, the Holy Spirit, is greater than the spirit of antichrist.

The One who is in us is not the least bit nervous about Islam, Communism, or Humanism. He has the answer and that answer, as we find in the Revelation, will be swift, final, dramatic, and eternal. Jesus, however, does not have to wait for end-time events to begin to unfold in order to demonstrate His power over the world. He who is in us has assured us a victory today. Christians are invited to call on the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with assurance that He will hear us and answer us. Sadly, many in the church today stand before the Lord like a person standing before the main circuit breaker in his home. The home is totally without power and all he has to do is flip the switch and his home will be flooded with light. The believer stands in the presence of the Light of the World. All he has to do is pray in faith and that power will be turned on in the world. No power on earth can stand up against a church totally empowered by the Holy Spirit.

4:5 - FROM THE WORLD. “*They are from the world. Therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.*” There are three sources of temptation, the flesh, the world,

and Satan. Satan tempts through the flesh and he most effectively tempts through the world. There is little wonder that he is called the prince of this world. All those who reject Christ are in the world and of the world. Sadly, many who profess a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ are walking in the flesh to the point that they can hardly be distinguished from the world.

I have an answer to the age-old question as to why the righteous often suffer while evil people prosper in the world. My answer came after I began hearing computer terminology a number of years ago. I heard a young man talking about programs that were “user friendly” and it hit me: The world blesses its own because the world is user-friendly to those who are of the world. Conversely, the world hates Christians because it hates Jesus Christ.

4:6 - FROM THIS WE KNOW. *“We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.”* The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit and the spirit of error is Satan. The success of the false teachers is easily explained. What they say appeals to the world because it is of the world, it proceeds from the spirit that controls the world, and it resonates with fallen man. Remember that the world is at enmity with God and Satan, the prince of the world, hates our Lord and everything that may potentially glorify God.

True believers hear the word of God and respond to it because they are from God and our message is from God. Paul was inspired to explain just how this works:

But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things! But all did not obey the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So **faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ** (Romans 10:14-17).

The subject is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is through the foolishness of preaching that people are saved (the Scripture does not say that it is through foolish preaching!). It is through the preaching of the Word that people grow in Christ and when the Word is faithfully preached God speaks to hearts in ways only He can understand.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 4:1

INTRODUCTION. Throughout the first three chapters of the First Epistle of John, the Lord shows us how we can know that we know Him. Remember that the Gospel According to John, the evangelistic Gospel, was written that we may know him; the First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know Him.

Woodrow Kroll posted on his website a message he had preached on AFR radio. In that message from the First Epistle of John he listed numerous proofs that we are children of

God. Let me share only a few of them:

1. You know you are saved if you walk in the light, 1 John 1:6.
2. You can know you're saved if you have fellowship with God's family, 1 John 1:7.
3. You know you're saved if you have a keen sense of your own sinfulness, 1 John 1:8.
4. If you're born again, you will live in willful obedience to God's Word. 1 John 2:3.
5. You know that you're born again if you no longer are enamored with what captivates the world, 1 John 2:15.
6. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone that practices righteousness is born of him, 1 John 2:29.
7. You eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord, 1 John chapter 3:1.

Now read the closing verses of chapter 3. With those verses as a backdrop, now we will go on to chapter 4.

I. WE ARE COMMANDED TO TEST THE SPIRITS, 1 JOHN 4:1a & b.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

A. Christians Must Not Believe Every Spirit.

- 1) Literally, it is "stop believing every spirit."
- 2) Some neglected sound doctrine.
- 3) Some rejected sound doctrine.
- 4) Some distorted sound doctrine.
 - a. Many had accepted a budding Gnosticism.
 - b. Some brought certain tenets of Gnosticism into the church.
 - c. They were perverting the Gospel through knowledge or speculation.
- 5) Many modern heresies are rooted in Gnosticism.
 - a. Eastern Mysticism has its roots in Gnosticism.
 - b. New Age Movements can be traced back to Gnosticism.
 - c. Humanism shows signs of Gnostic influence.

B. We Must Test the Spirits Today.

- 1) There are many false spirits in the world today.
- 2) Some false spirits are associated with pagan worship.

- 3) Some are associated with the so-called Christian Cults (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses).
- 4) Many are associated with New Age religious movements.
- 5) Many others simply redefine the Gospel.

There were the hippies of the sixties who rejected Christ, but there were others who were called Jesus Freaks. They were not interested in sound doctrine. They just wanted to love everyone. Then there were people who wanted to abolish all denominational distinctives. They advocated love, not doctrine. These people talk a good game. I even heard of a church whose pastor announced that they rejected doctrines and dogma, they just believed that God is Creator, Jesus is Savior, and the Bible is the Word of God. Sounds good, does it not? Of course, he had just listed his first tenets of their faith (thus, dogma).

Doctrine is truth, and truth does not preclude love. As a matter of fact it is impossible to embrace sound biblical doctrine without embracing love for God and love for other people. At the same time, true Christian love is guided by sound doctrine, because godly love, agape', is a mental attitude love. It is directed with the mind. If you wait until you get a warm fuzzy feeling before you reach out to some people you are going to wait a long time because some of the people who may need you are not very pleasant. Christian love and sound doctrine are not mutually exclusive. In fact, there is no way you can grow in either while neglecting the other.

- 5) We are to test these false spirits.
 - a. We must follow Scripture.
 - b. We must pray for guidance.
 - c. We must follow the Holy Spirit.
 - d. We must listen to sound doctrinal preaching.
 - e. We must learn through Sunday School and Discipleship Training.
 - f. We must offer a clear defense of the Gospel.

II. MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD, 1c.

A. The Book of Jeremiah Provides Us With Examples of False Prophets.

- 1) Some advocated false religions (see Jeremiah, Ch. 2).
- 2) Most simply watered down the truth (led by prophets and priests).
- 3) There are many examples in the New Testament.
- 4) They are still with us today.

We could take time to look at many false prophets who have gone out into the world to spread false doctrine, but I will mention only a few. Who has not seen the two young men riding around the neighborhood on bicycles, spreading a false gospel under the deceptive name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints? And of course, there are the Jehovah's Witnesses. While many may dismiss these cultic visitors (even though they never show up when it is convenient) as harmless, they are preying on our church members and records show that a large numbers of their converts come from mainline churches.

All of the false prophets are not in some organized cult group. The first person I heard applaud the Supreme Court ruling which took prayer out of public schools was my Systematic Theology professor in seminary. Every time President Bush advocates church involvement in trying to meet the needs of people today, the networks march out "the reverend" Barry Lynn to tell us why Christianity is some how bad for America.

Southern Baptists adopted a Baptist Faith and Message Statement in 1925 and that statement served the denomination for a number of years. However, by 1963, SBC President Hershel Hobbs felt that a revised Baptist Faith and Message Statement was needed. That statement declares that Jesus Christ is the criterion by which Scripture shall be interpreted. That sounds good, and many thought that statement would have drawn pastors and teachers to a stronger view of Scripture. The emphasis was to be on the fact that all Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and was therefore infallible - truth without error.

Unfortunately, some people, or so it is claimed, used this statement to justify their not holding to the Scripture as infallible. When they came to something they did not like they simply said, well that doesn't matter anyway because Jesus is the criterion by which we interpret the Bible. In other words, in their scheme of things since Jesus transcends the Bible, if there is a question about something in the Bible we can simply let our commitment to Jesus take precedence over that Scripture

At the 2000 Convention, Southern Baptists clarified a number of issues. The word "inerrant" had come into use over the past generation to define the position of those who held to a very strong view of Scripture. In 1973, I spent a lot of time with the late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there. We discussed Scripture a number of times and neither used the word inerrant at the time. Dr. Edlelman was in the process of recruiting a new professor for the Criswell Center of Biblical Studies where he served as president. One day, Dr. Eddleman told me about a conversation he had had with a professor from England. He told me that man was a strong Biblicist. I like that term! A strong Biblicist.

B. We Must Test These False Prophets.

- 1) Some are obviously false prophets.
- 2) Others are not so easily detected.

Have you ever had anyone come up to you and say something like this: "God gave me a word for you." Or, "I have a word from the Lord for you." Others make the same claim in different words.

I understand that just before he went to the pulpit to preach once Sunday a woman approached Charles Haddon Spurgeon and said, "Do you know what God told me to tell you?"

Spurgeon, according to the report snapped, "Yes. And He spoke to me after he spoke to you and he told me to tell you to shut up!"

CONCLUSION. God does not want you to be deceived. He wants you to know truth from error, true prophets from false prophets, the true Spirit from false spirits. Let's read 1 John 4:2-3.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 4:2-6

INTRODUCTION. The Gospel of John was written that we might know God through a personal relationship with His Son Jesus Christ (John 20:30-31). The First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know Him. God wants us to know, provides abundant evidence that we are children of God, and expects us to accept that evidence. With all the evidence He provides, it would seem to me that it would be a serious offense for any believer to refuse to accept the evidence He provides.

Regardless of what position different believers hold on Security of Believers, all Christians desire assurance of salvation. Once we have assurance of salvation, the Lord wants us to know sound doctrine, to find His will, and to grow in your relationship with Him. There are countless false prophets out there, spreading false, doctrines and seducing not only lost people but many Christians. Christians do not have to be deceived and the Lord has taken all the steps necessary to prevent our being carried away with false religions. And believe me, the danger is as great and the warning as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago.

I. WE CAN KNOW THE TRUE SPIRIT OF GOD, 4:2-3.

A. The True Spirit Confesses That Jesus Came in the Flesh, 4:2.

- 1) Jesus was absolutely human.
- 2) He was absolutely divine.

B. This Scripture Destroys Gnosticism and All Related Heresies.

- 1) John 1:1-14 answers Gnosticism and all similar false religions.
- 2) One principle tenet of Gnosticism was the denial of the humanity of Jesus.
- 3) Most of the cults of the past two thousand years have their roots in Gnosticism.
- 4) Your belief in both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus proves your are of God.

C. Any Spirit That Does not Confess the Humanity of Jesus Is a Spirit of Antichrist, 4:3.

The Gnostics taught that spirit is good and matter is evil, and that spirit could not touch matter without becoming contaminated by it. When some of those pagans who had embraced Gnosticism became Christians they tried to synchronize Christianity with their former religion. By the end of the First Century, an incipient Gnosticism was having a negative impact on the church, as all heresies will if left unchecked. God's first response is seen in the writings of Paul, but in the Gospel According to John the Lord places his heel squarely on the head of the serpent and begins to grind it into the dust, and though it is writhing and striking out today, its doom is set and there will never be a reprieve.

The former Gnostics who came into the church were trying to fit Jesus into the Gnostic scheme. They taught that there was one supreme God, who had created a system of lesser gods - and the lesser gods created lesser gods. Picture a chain running down from God, with each link representing an a god, in a descending order down from the supreme

god. Way down the chain, claimed the Gnostics, there was a god they called Logos, a god so far removed from the supreme God that if he became contaminated the contamination could not reach the higher gods, and certainly not the supreme god. At the same time the Logos retained enough power to create the world. He would have been contaminated but he would not contaminate the supreme god. John was the human instrument by which the Lord refuted this false doctrine. Listen to His words:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" John 1:1-3.

The word "Logos" means word, with the emphasis on communication. How does God best communicate His message of redemption to us? Through Jesus, the Christ of the Bible, but not the Christ of the cults.

Jesus is eternally the very God of God, not a god (as the Jehovah's Witnesses version has it), but the God. He is one with the Father, the Second Person of the Trinity. Sadly, during the last half of the Twentieth Century a lot of preachers rejected the Trinity in favor of a unitary theory of God. Francis Schaeffer said that it was the Doctrine of the Trinity that enabled him to move beyond agnosticism to theism. His reasoning was that if God had to create man to meet some need within Himself for fellowship or a relationship, then God was not complete within Himself. There is a horizontal relationship between the members of the Trinity. We are blessed with the privilege of a vertical relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God.

That covers the divinity of Christ, but what about His humanity? John covers that: "And the Word (Logos - Jesus) **became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" John 1:14. That was probably written around A. D. 86, and now a few years later John was inspired to write: "...Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist," 1 John 4:2-3.

II. WE CAN DISCERN BETWEEN TRUTH AND ERROR, 4:4-6.

A. Believers Are Empowered and Equipped to Discern Between True and False Spirits, 4:4.

- 1) True believers have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- 2) True believers have overcome false teachers and false doctrines.
- 3) God Who indwells us is greater than any false teacher or false doctrine.

B. False Religions Are of the World, 4:5.

- 1) Their speech is the speech of the world.
- 2) The world is "user friendly" to those who are of the world,
- 3) The world is an enemy with Christ.

C. There Is a Way to Discern Between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error. 4:6.

- 1) We are of God.
- 2) We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- 3) We have the Word of God.
- 4) We have teachers to teach us the truth.
- 5) We have preachers to proclaim the Word of God.

When the Lord called me to preach the Gospel He did not call me to traumatize His sheep; He did not call me to entertain His sheep; He did not call me to psychoanalyze His sheep. He called me to feed His sheep. That means preaching the Word, and the most effective method is expository preaching. New Testament preaching seeks to edify the saints and to equip the church.

D. We Must Discern Between Truth and Error Today.

- 1) There are many false prophets.
- 2) There are many false spirits.
- 3) There are many false doctrines.

E. God Will Give Us a Victory Over False Spirits.

- 1) He is the answer to Mormonism, which preys on the ignorance of God's people.
- 2) He is the answer to the Jehovah's Witnesses, who seek out untrained Christians.
- 3) He is the answer to the occult, with all its movements and approaches.
- 4) He is the answer to Islam, which attracts support from the liberal media.
- 5) He is the answer to New Age Movements, of which there are many.

Ann Coulter, in her new book, *TREASON*, quotes the former Communist Whittaker Chambers as saying that it had been his fate to witness "the two great faiths of our time" - Communism and God. Communism, he said is "the vision of man without God." He went on to say that it was man's second oldest faith: "Its promise was whispered in the first days of creation under the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, "ye shall be as gods." These, he added, were the "irreconcilable opposites - God and man, Soul and Mind, Freedom and Communism" [p. 9).

From the Garden of Eden until early in the Twentieth Century man lived in a theistic world. Either man believed there is a God or he believes there is no God. Communism, which Ann Coulter rightly identified as the enemy of God and the enemy of the church, was not a normal religion, even though it functioned with religious zeal and with religious organization. There were notable atheists during this time, but basically man believed

that God existed, even if he did not commit himself to Him. The Huxleys and Charles Darwin in England, and their counterparts in America were preaching a gospel of evolutionary Humanism. The Scopes Trial in 1925 gave the liberal media just the cause for which they were looking, and within another ten years it was hard to find a college professor who did not embrace evolution and mock special creation.

Schaeffer said that England entered the post-Christian period of her history in 1895, America in 1935. I have often argued in my mind that America - I only knew the Bible Belt - entered the post-Christian era following World War II, but the more I study it the more I realize that as a nation Schaeffer's date may be closer.

As I said earlier, from Adam until the Twentieth Century man the world was basically theistic, but Humanists did everything within their power to supplant God and enthrone man as sovereign on earth and in human minds and hearts. One man said that he wanted to get rid of "the dying carcass of Christianity" in America. Using the Humanist Manifesto, the Communist Manifesto, the ACLU, and every other force at their disposal, they waged a war against Christianity and the Word of God. The Scopes Trial was a major attack on God, the Bible, and the church.

The goal of the Humanists was to get rid of every vestige of Christianity and make America a totally secular society. Then, something happened. At first it was so subtle we hardly noticed any difference, but there was a big difference. We began hearing the term New Age, but sadly, most Christians thought New Age referred to a small bunch of cooks with some weird music. In reality, the Humanists said, "There is no God." This was an "in your face" attack on God. Masses were turned off by this ugly, offensive attack.

In stepped the New Agers with a response, "Of course there is a god. In fact there are many gods. And if my god suits me and your god suits you we should both be happy for each other. They adopted the moral relativity of the Humanists, but they injected a godless Humanism with a spiritual dimension, and America fell for it. Gallup Polls seemed to indicate that Christianity was winning the war against Humanism. We were not winning the war; the New Age Movements were supplanting Humanism a force that undermines the Gospel.

Then something else happened. When the term New Age began to attract unwanted attention, they dropped that name and continued. With their same influence in environmental issues, in politics, and in social matters. I was first alerted to the satanic subtlety of the movement when I read a book on Post-Modern Times and realized that Postmodernism is nothing more than the same old New Age philosophy. Millions who have no idea what it is to which they are submitting are embracing it.

The New Age Movements are deeply rooted in Eastern Mysticism. Guess where we find the roots of Eastern Mysticism? They are planted deeply in the same Gnosticism of which John is warning in this epistle. Sadly, the church as a whole has never come to grips with New Age religious influence. They think we are still fighting a war against "Secular Humanism." This is a point Ann Coulter misses - even though she does not miss much!

A year or so ago I heard two people asking if we thought our culture was moving beyond New Age to Animism. I responded to one by pointing out that the New Age umbrella is big enough to accommodate Animism, just as it does so many other religions. They only hate Jesus Christ and any Christian who will not compromise with them. Let me stress this

again, New Age, or Post-modern religions love religion, but hate Jesus Christ. Is that surprising? Did Jesus not tell us that the world hates Him?

Now, our greatest danger does not come from the center of one of these New Age Movements; it comes from those who have been influenced by them without knowing it. Some time ago, I was introduced to a professional lady, a successful, self-assured lady who has a lot of power and influence. Suddenly, she smiled and said, "Oh, I just read your book on Philippians. I normally don't like Paul, but I like your book." She went on to stress again that she did not like Paul. I probed for a reason, but mostly I waited for her to explain her position. She added, "Paul was strictly a product of his times."

She went on to add that she like to argue about religion. I don't! As long as you are throwing light on a subject you should pursue it. But once you begin to throw more heat than light on any subject you may find yourself working under the law of diminishing returns. If you persist the whole thing may blow up in your face. But what was this young attorney saying? She goes to church, reads what she likes from the Scripture, but avoids Paul. What did Paul write that turns her off? Is it possible that she rejects what Paul writes about the roles of men in women in the home? I know there are people who do not like Paul because of what he wrote about homosexuality. Others may not like him because he is judgmental, and still others because what Paul writes is too exclusive for them.

The truth is, Paul had been a product of his times - but that was before he met the Lord on the Road to Damascus. After that, he was a product of the mind of God. What he wrote was what he was moved to write by the Holy Spirit. Every word is God-breathed, as thought exhaled by the Holy Spirit.

6) The truth will protect you against other errors.

The better grounded we are in the Word of God the less likely we are to be deceived by left-wing extremists - or right-wing extremists. There are a lot of church members with good intentions and righteous fervor who nevertheless broadcast errors every day. We must stay with the Word of God and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is glorious! It is also realistic. Stay with the Word of God to avoid problems - and to enjoy His blessings.

CONCLUSION. You can know the truth from error. God has empowered you resist evil; He will equip you to discern between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. He has sent His Spirit to guide you. There is no reason for you to be misled. If you are a born again believer you have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the divine Author of Scripture, Who is not the divine Illuminator, Whose work it is to help us understand the Word of God and make an application of it in our daily life. Now, listen to our text again (1 John 4:2-6).

II. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF LOVE, 1 JOHN 4:7-24.

A. Godly Love Is an Awesome Force in the World, 4:7-13.

1) Love is the proof we belong to God, 4:7-8.

4:7 - LOVE ONE ANOTHER. *"Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from*

God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” God is the source and origin of love. In fact, the Bible tells us that God is love. His children must practice this same kind of love, both for God and for others. This love (*agape*) is a mental attitude kind of love, a love that can be directed by the mind and the will. It is not a slave to emotions, but it does not preclude emotions. When we are born again we receive a new nature, a nature like that of our Lord. If fact, we are part-takers in His nature. Love in an individual is a reflection of God’s love for him and his response to Him.

4:8 - GOD IS LOVE. *“The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”* When we are born again we take on the nature of Jesus Christ. We do not perfectly take on His nature and character and will not until we are perfected, or glorified, but we do take on His nature at the point of salvation. From the time we are saved, God puts His Spirit in us to conform us to the nature of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30). Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus...” When we begin to think as Jesus thought we will begin to act as Jesus acted. We will love as Jesus loved. That is sanctification. Someone has well said that sanctification does not have as much to do with how high you jump as how straight you walk when you come down. In reality, however, sanctification has to a lot more to do with how well we are being conformed to the image of Christ. No one who does not love others can claim to be like Christ.

2) Love in its essence is revealed in Christ, 4:9-10.

The coming of Jesus Christ is the greatest manifestation of the love of God, as John was inspired to write in John 3:16. The noun and verb forms of “love” (*agape, agapao*) occur a total of 27 times in 4:7-21. It would be a serious mistake for any believer to overlook the importance placed upon love for others, especially love for other believers in this passage. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes carries a chart in which the qualities of love are demonstrated.

The Qualities of Love	
The Source of Love	The Effect of Love
God personifies love (4:8, 16)	We reflect God’s Love in the world (4:7)
God loves us (4:19)	We love God; our fear is gone; we keep his commandments (4:18, 19; 5:3)
God gave His Son for us (4:9, 10)	We give our substance for others (3:17; 4:11)
Christ laid down His life for us (3:16)	We lay down our lives for others (3:16)

This is one of John’s greatest passages. *God is love* (vv. 8, 16). Love is His supreme quality. God can be known only by those who live *in love* (v. 16). Yet we could not know how, nor

be able, to love Him if He had not **first loved us** (v. 19). *If we love one another*, God abides in us and His love is perfected or matured in us (v. 12) [Ryrie Study Bible, NASB].

4:9 - GOD'S LOVE WAS REVEALED. *“God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.”* Both Robertson and Vincent stress that the Greek construction demands, not “among us” or “to us”, but “in our case.” God seeks to reveal His love to the world, but only in the case of believers is that revelation complete. The lost person cannot grasp the significance of the love of God, nor can he appreciate the depth of God’s redemptive love in sending His Son to die for us so that we might live through Him. God reveals His love for us in many ways, but the most important and the most impressive way was in sending His Son to die for us. A famous Christian philosopher and theologian was asked, “What is the greatest thought you ever had?” Upon reflection, he said, “God loves me.”

HIS ONE AND ONLY SON. In John 3:16, God sent his “only begotten Son” (KJV) to die for us. The Greek word (*monogenês*) stresses that His Son is unique - “His One and Only Son.” Jesus came to die for us so that we might live in Him and for Him.

4:10- LOVE CONSISTS IN THIS. *“Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* John now explains godly love for us. It means to make propitiation or expiation. Propitiation refers to God’s wrath being satisfied by the death of Christ (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). “Expiation emphasizes the removal of sin by the sacrifice that satisfied God. Sin interrupts normal relations with God; expiation removes sin and restores the relationship” [RSB Notes].

3) God’s love obligates us to love others, 4:11.

4:11 - LOVE ONE ANOTHER. *“Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.”* John makes a personal plea with the address, “Dear friends,” consistent with his calling them “My little children” (2:1). The Believer’s Study Bible has a good summary:

Returning to the theme of mutual love (“love one another,” vv. 7, 11, 12), John shows that love is grounded in God’s nature. Those who have been “born of God” ought to emulate His character. God provides both the source (v. 9) and example (v. 11) of the believer’s love. Moreover, love for others is an integral part of one’s relationship with God (v. 12). While “no one has seen God” (cf. John 1:18), God’s love is evident in the work of Christ (v. 9) and in the believer’s love for others (v. 12) [BSB Notes].

This is the Second Great Commandment, and the key to the Golden Rule. This does not say that we are given the option of loving one another; it says that we must love one another. If you cannot bring yourself to do that you do not know the God of love.

4) Godly love is the assurance of salvation and fellowship with God, 4: 12-13.

4:12 - HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US. *“No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.”* The unseen God, Who revealed Himself in His Son, is today revealing Himself in and through His people, and that revelation is never any clearer than when His people love Him and love one another. This is not the “I never met a man I didn’t like” attitude of Will Rogers. Nor, is it the “I just love everybody” kind of love expressed by outgoing people who love to be with people. This is the special love empowered by the indwelling Spirit of God. If the love of God is perfected in us no one will ever have to wonder whether or not we belong to Him.

4:13 - HOW WE KNOW. *“This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit.”* This is **the eighth of the nine proofs** or tests for knowing that we are children of God. We may be sure of certain things: (1) no lost person is given assurance of salvation; (2) no Christian is persuaded by Satan or the word that he is a child of God; and (3) assurance of salvation is no more an accident than our salvation is. We do not become a child of God by “finding God.” He finds us. Jesus came to seek and to find the lost; He did not come to see if the lost, through some special knowledge, mystery, or revelation, could find Him.

Assurance is not left to chance or to some unexplainable mystery. When you are born again, God places His Spirit in your heart. The Holy Spirit never indwells a lost person. The saved person who is walking in the Spirit is aware of the fact that the Holy Spirit is in his or her heart. The saved person who is walking in the flesh may well wonder about his salvation. If you are saved, the Holy Spirit will bear witness to our Spirit that we are children of God. Look again at the nine tests whereby we know that we know Him:

- 1) 2:3 - “This is **how we are sure** that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands.”
- 2) 2:5 - “But whoever keeps His word, **truly in him the love of God is perfected.**”
- 3) 3:16 - “This is **how we have come to know love:** He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.”
- 4) 3:18-20 - “Little children, we must not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth; **that is how we will know we are of the truth**, and will convince our hearts in His presence, 20 because if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.”
- 5) 3:24 - “The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And **the way we know** that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.”
- 6) 4:2 - “**This is how you know the Spirit of God:** Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

7) 4:6 - "We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. **From this we know the Spirit of truth** and the spirit of deception."

8) 4:13 - "**This is how we know** that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit."

9) 5:2 - "**This is how we know** that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands."

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 4:7-13

INTRODUCTION. In the first six verses of chapter four we have seen that Satan will distort the Gospel. He does not want this message to get out, and he will use any method to try to pervert the message. He will try to persuade the believer that he is lost. He is not called the accuser for nothing.

A Viet Nam veteran, in an interview on AFR Radio, recently talked with the hosts about a speech by David Horowitz, who by his own admission was a former Bolshevik. He said that Horowitz told a group about a meeting at which leading American Communists made plans to take America by taking over her institutions. When asked about their success they insisted that they had control of all institutions except the military. With a person from both the Senate and House committees on defense in the meeting they declared that they would make their move on the military by pushing gays in the military and women in combat. Do you remember what happened to our military during the nineties?

Then someone asked, **what about the church**. The spokesman, with a wolfish smirk, responded, "**We took that first!**" Could that be true? And if so, how did they do it? How successful have they been? In First John 4:1-6, we read about false teachers, false teachings, and false spirits. Have we not seen doctrinal distinctives between the true and false doctrine distorted? Have you considered the National Council of Churches? Barry Lynn? Liberalism in old mainline churches? And what about all those churches that can quote all the verses on praise, but can find nothing in the Bible about being silent before a holy God?

The Mormon Church pays for ads on Television, offering a King James Version of the Bible to anyone who calls their 800 number. If people would call and request the Bible, and read it seriously, it would destroy the Mormon Church. Jehovah's Witnesses push a new translation of the Bible which misrepresents the divinity of Jesus Christ. In John 1:1, Jesus is called "a" god. That is a satanic lie. New Agers (postmodern religious types) tell us if you really want to discover Christ, look within and you will discover that you are your own Christ, you are God (that is monism).

With this in mind, let us look at verses 7-13. In verse 6, we read, "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

I. LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, 4:7-10.

A. Love Is of God, 4:7-8.

1) Those who have godly love are of God. We have covered this before, but let me review it briefly again. There are four basic kinds of love mentioned in the Greek. First, there is **romantic love**, and obviously one does not have to be godly to experience romantic love. Next, there is **family love**. Some people, Paul said, did not love the people they were naturally supposed to love. Family love is too important to overstate it here. I really believe one of the reasons we are having so many moral problems among young people today is that there are too many homes without a father's love - and discipline.

Then, there is **brotherly love** (*phileo*). There are a lot of lost people who demonstrate brotherly love more practically and earnestly than many Christians. That is unfortunate, but it proves that you do not have to be a Christian to experience brotherly love.

Finally, there is the **agape' love**, which some interpret as Christian love. In fact, *agape'* is godly love when one is loving God or other people as God loves them. However, in John 3:19, we find ungodly people loving ungodly things with *agape'* love. There are passages in which we see that God loves His Son with both *agape'* love, as well as *phileo* love.

So, someone may ask, what is so special about *agape'* love? First, it is **a mental attitude kind of love**, it is not driven by emotions. Have you not know some people who really turned you off, yet you had a deep spiritual burden for them? God commands us to love others, and you do not command emotions. God wants us to have a mind that is open to every impression of His Spirit. He wants us to seek the highest good for others, especially for Christians. Of course, the highest good for the lost person is for him or her to come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

2) Those who do not have godly love are not of God. We have looked at **false spirits, false prophets, and false doctrines**. Now we come to **false professions**. If you do not show godly love for others, you are a hypocrite when you claim to love them. A friend told me he was talking with a lady he had known for several years when the lady brought up the name of another choir member. She said, "You know we love each others dearly, but..."

My friend told her she needed to stop lying about loving one another. He said, "You can't stand each other and you know it!" Who was right? I was aware of the fact that they did not seem to love one another, but they may have had a mental attitude love for each other which was concealed by the envy and jealousy that was manifested in their relationship.

3) God is love. The Bible reveals many things about God, but nothing is more amazing than this. William Barclay, the late Bible teacher and author of a devotional commentary often called the pastor's Saturday night friend, was once asked, "What is the greatest thought you have ever had?" He answered, "Jesus loves me." I think I read somewhere that Immanuel Kant offered a similar answer, "God love me." It is amazing that our great Creator loves us and gives us the privilege of loving Him. They don't call it Amazing Grace for nothing!

B. God Manifested His Love For Us in a Marvelous Way, 4:9.

1) To manifest love means to demonstrate it.

2) To manifest it is to reveal it.

3) To manifest it is to proclaim it. God manifested His love for us:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

C. Here Is The Greatest Manifestation of Love Ever Seen, 4:10.

1) It is not so amazing that we would love God. We eat His food, we drink His water, we breathe His air, we are held on earth by His gravity. We were created with a need for Him. He is the source of our physical life and He is the Author of our salvation. Why wouldn't we love Him?!! We would be very foolish not to love Him. Sadly, millions today do not love Him. That is incredible, but it is true.

2) The amazing thing is that God loves us. God created man in His own image and placed him in the only true utopia the world has even known. He visited with Adam and Eve daily, talking with them, and without a doubt, teaching them His ways and revealing His blessings. God has continually blessed those who continually turn from Him, curse Him, and rebel against His nature, character, and commandments. Paul states it like this: *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8).

3) He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Ryrie explains that propitiation refers to God's wrath being satisfied by the death of Christ (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Expiation emphasizes the removal of sin by the sacrifice that satisfied God. Sin interrupts normal relations with God; expiation removes sin and restores the relationship."

II. TO KNOW GOD IS TO LOVE HIM, 4:10 - 13.

A. Beloved, if God so Loved Us, We also ought to Love One Another, 4:10.

I read a cute little story with a powerful message:

Frightened by the clamor of thunder in the night, a little child cried out. Holding her securely in his arms, her father explained that she needn't fear. God would take care of her because He loved her greatly.

"I know God will take care of me and love me," she replied. "But right now, Daddy, I want someone with skin on to love me."

We are to be God's love, with skin on! [Bible Illustrator]

B. God Loves Us, But No One Has Seen Him, 4:11-13.

1) We cannot see God because He is Spirit, 4:11. John (1:18) writes, "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." God is Spirit (John 4:24), no one has ever seen God in His essence, His Spirit-being. Yet God did assume a visible form which men saw in Old Testament times (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 24:9-10; Judg. 13:22; Isa. 6:1; Dan. 7:9), and in Jesus men could see God (John 14:8-9).

2) Though we cannot see Him, He abides in those who love one another, 4:12. Here is an

amazing story:

Corrie Ten Boom shares this true story in her book, *The Hiding Place*:

It was a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there -- the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blانched face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself. [BI]

3) By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit, 4:13. According to verse 12, we know that God abides in us if we love one another. According to verse 13, we know that we abide in Him and He in us - a mutual abiding - because he places His Spirit in the hearts believes, those who love and serve Him.

CONCLUSION. The Gospel of John was written that we might know God. First John was written that we might know that we know Him. God does not leave assurance of our salvation to chance. He stresses this in His Word, through His specific promises, and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 4:13-16

INTRODUCTION. A young lady came by our home a number of years ago and asked if she might speak with me. I knew her and her family, and recalled that they were members of a Catholic church in another town. She began by stating that she was getting married to a man who was a member of our church and she wanted to convert. She wanted to become a Baptist. When I began to ask questions, it was obvious that she did not have any idea what it meant to be saved, to be born again, to have a personal experience with the Lord. I shared (a good Baptist term!) some Scripture with her and carefully explained that she needed to come to know the Lord in a personal relationship before she was ready to make any other decision. She did not understand, so as she left I encouraged her to read the Gospels over and over until she understood what the Lord wanted her to do.

Later she told me she was reading what I asked her to read and she found it interesting. Hesitantly, she added, "But there seems to be a lot of repetition there." I talked with her about the four Gospels, pointing out the similarities and differences. The next time I saw

her she was excited. A truck driver had visited the place where she was working part-time while pursuing a degree in criminal justice. He visited young people at the center as often as possible. On this occasion he shared his testimony with her and she was saved. She was still excited when she told me about her new relationship with the Lord.

This young lady had made a statement that any student of the Bible has observed: There is a lot of repetition in the Bible. However, there is no repetition without purpose. There are a few central themes that run throughout the Bible, one dominant theme that may be followed from beginning to end. The Bible reveals the existence of God and His various attributes, as well as His nature and character. Then there is the one central theme, whether we call it God's plan of salvation or the revelation of God's redemptive love, or give it some other designation. W. A. Criswell used to preach and write about "The Scarlet Thread" that runs throughout the Bible. The scarlet thread to which he meant the blood of Jesus Christ.

Yes, there is a lot of repetition in the Bible, but none because God ran out of something to say! It is there for the purpose of reiteration - He wants us to get the message. At the same time, Paul would write to the Corinthians, who loved great oratory, that he had professed to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That should be the central theme of all preaching. It may be an oversimplification, but there are two themes that run throughout the New Testament and we should never stray very far from them. First, the lost are told how to be saved. Second, the saved are told how they should live.

In the Gospel that bears his name, John tells us how to be saved. In the First Epistle of John, he was inspired to tell us how we can be saved, and know we are saved, and then he tells us how God wants His children to live. The emphasis in the fourth chapter of this epistle is not on doing as much as it is on being. When the Holy Spirit is permitted to work in the hearts of believers, He will conform us into the image of our Savior (Romans 8:29). We are never more like our Lord than when we love Him as He loves us, and when we love others as He loves them. Now, Let us look at 1 John 4:13-16.

I. WE CAN KNOW THAT WE ARE SAVED, 4:13-14.

A. God Wants Us to Know that We Know Him, 4:13.

- 1) "By this" implies the emphasis God places on our assurance of salvation.
- 2) We can know that "we abide in Him."
- 3) We can know that He abides in us.
- 4) We know it "because He has given us His Spirit."

At the point of your salvation, God places His Holy Spirit in your heart. This is the indwelling of the Spirit, or the baptism of the Spirit. He places His Spirit in your heart for a purpose, and that purpose is not passive. No one is saved apart from the redemptive ministry of the Holy Spirit, and no one is sanctified apart from the active ministry of the Holy Spirit in his life. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit once for all time, but we need the daily filling of the Spirit if we are to grow in His grace and knowledge.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to provide us with numerous proofs by which we can know we are saved. Now, get this: The Holy Spirit miraculously inspired the writing of all Scripture, He has miraculously preserved it, and He miraculously illuminates the minds of the believer to enable him to understand the Scripture and make an application of it in his daily life.

Paul affirms this in Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." The Holy Spirit, the divine Author of every word of Scripture, is instrumental in our salvation. He convicts the lost of sin, of righteousness, and the judgment to come. He indwells the believer to empower, guide, convict, and bless. Our Lord wants us to come to know His Son as Savior and honor Him as Lord, and His Spirit has been sent to accomplish His purpose.

B. We Have Seen and Do Testify That the Father Sent the Son to Be the Savior, 4:14.

- 1) "And" denotes the work of the Spirit in our understanding.
- 2) Through the Holy Spirit "we have seen" that God sent His Son to be our Savior.
- 3) "Do testify" means that we profess Him and confess Him.
- 4) We know and testify that Jesus is the Savior.

I well remember the day Dr. J. Hardee Kennedy, that great Hebrew and Old Testament scholar, taught us a special lesson from the first chapter of Isaiah 1:3: "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand." Dr. Kennedy explained that the first use of the word "know" means that the ox recognizes its master. The second use of the word means to know by experience. They knew the various names for God, they knew their history and could recite stories of God's dealings with His chosen people, but they did not know Him through a personal experience.

We are given the amazing opportunity to know the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer personally! That is more than my mind can comprehend. Just think what it means for a holy God to permit a fallen sinner to call him "Father"! Only those who have been born again know the Father; only the believer knows Jesus as Savior. Only those who dwell in God - those in whom He dwells - can "bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world" (vs. 15).

II. TRUE BELIEVERS CONFESS JESUS CHRIST, 4:15-16.

A. True Believers Confess Jesus Christ, 4:15.

- 1) "Whosoever Confess Jesus Is the Son of God."

When I started out in the ministry if you had asked the average lost person in a rural community in the south if he believed in God you could be almost certain he would answer in the affirmative. As a matter of fact, I often asked people, "Do you believe in God?", anticipating that the answer would be, "Yes." I might ask, "Do you believe Jesus Christ is the

Son of God?" When he said that he did, I would then show him my Bible and ask, "Do you believe this is the Word of God?" I do not remember anyone at the time who said no to either question, in church, in an home, in a cotton field, in the Hinds County Jail, or the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

Does that mean that all those people were "the sons of God"? Of course not! They had grown up in a Christian environment and they knew the jargon, whether they had been born again or not. These people professed a belief that there is a God and they knew the Bible stories. Some of them understood that they were lost and needed to be saved, but others wanted to say anything I wanted to hear to get rid of me - they had been through it many times before. Some of them gave all the right responses until you asked them to pray to receive Jesus Christ and then they pulled out the same old excuses that they had used for years.

Now, let me stress this as clearly as I can: there are a lot of people who have made a profession of faith who have never really confessed Jesus Christ. If I might paraphrase Martin Luther - the original one - "If you do not confess Christ at the point of attack, you have denied Him, no matter how loudly you have professed Him."

I am convinced that many people have made "a public profession of faith" when they when they came under conviction of sin - that is, under conviction of sin they walked down the aisle and "gave the preacher their hand", nodding to anything he asked them, without ever repenting. They were baptized and attended for a few weeks and then began missing, and finally dropped out all together. Some have been manipulated down the aisle by a master manipulator - and there have been some experts through the years, especially in getting children and young people to "walk the aisles."

I helped with a city-wide crusade which was led by outstanding men, who did nothing that I questioned. They were totally committed to reaching young people for the Lord. When the invitation was given, we received large numbers of young people who came forward making professions of faith. I spoke with a teenager I knew and she told me she was making a rededication. Later she told me she was standing with a lot of teenaged girls and most of them had no idea why they had come to the front.

"Why did you come down here?"

"I don't know, I just followed her."

"Why did you come?"

"I was with her and didn't want to get lost."

Now, let me tell you how the Holy Spirit works when we do not get in His way. Dr. Leo Eddleman was scheduled to preach a revival for me in Bastrop, Louisiana around 1973. Cecil Gregory, pastor of Cherry Ridge Baptist at the time, told me he really wished his people could hear Dr. Eddleman. I suggested that we might hold the morning services at his church and the evening services at our church. We scheduled the morning service at a time when the Cherry Ridge Christian School could attend the services. Following the Monday morning service Dr. Eddleman told asked me if I thought he was communicating with the children - it had been a long time since he had spoken to children. I offered one suggestion: "Why don't you begin the service tomorrow by saying something to them in He-

brew." He did and he had their interest. Before the week was over 102 children who had listened to the simple message of salvation made a profession of faith and Brother Gregory followed up on all of them and found that 93 of those children were baptized in various churches. You can believe the news got around and some other pastors came to see what was happening in those services. I remember that Dr. Eddleman asked visiting pastors to come down and help counsel with the children. Brother Gregory and I have talked about that revival from time to time over the years. Neither he nor I baptized a one of those 93 children, but of the 102 who made professions of faith, various pastors baptized those they were convinced understood at the time. Some of the others may have been baptized later.

This great harvest of souls was all the work of the Holy Spirit. There was absolutely no promotion of the morning services within the school, other than scheduling a break so they could attend the service. There were no games or gimmicks to get the children to attend. There was no manipulation on the part of the evangelist. The invitation was very simple and totally without any human pressure. What we saw was the mighty moving of the Holy Spirit.

A few years before John wrote this epistle, he was inspired to write, "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). God wants us to know Him, and to know Him is to profess Him and to confess Him.

2) To confess Jesus in this context is a serious matter.

Paul wrote, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10). You cannot confess Jesus as Savior and Lord if you do not believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead.

3) God dwells in those who confess Him.

Actually, there is a mutual indwelling here. We dwell in Him and He dwells in us. Is that not absolutely amazing? To think that God would indwell me. And that He would permit me to dwell in Him! Only true children of God can confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This confession is based on what one knows in his mind, that of which he is convinced of in his heart. This is a total commitment: intellect, emotions, and volition (mind, feelings, will).

B. True Believers Know the Love of God, 4:16.

1) Believers have come to know the love which God has for us.

2) We have believed God loves us.

In all the history of the world it has never been expressed more clearly than in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Paul wrote, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

3) God is love.

As John has already written, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (4:8).

I would challenge anyone to make a careful study of the attributes of God and then review that study from time to time. God is Omnipotent (all powerful). He is Omnipresent (everywhere present at the same time). He is Omniscient (all knowing). He is holy. And thank God, He is love. William Barclay was once asked what was the greatest thought he had ever had after years of studying the Bible. His answer: "Jesus loves me."

4) The one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

CONCLUSION. How can we read these words without praising our great God and our glorious Savior? God is love. He loves us. He loved us while we were still in sin. He gave His Son to die for us and raised him on the third day. He gives us the privilege of a personal relationship with Him. He saves all who trust in Him and when. When he saves us He dwells in us and permits us to dwell in Him. Why would anyone turn down such a Savior?

B. Love Is Expressed Faith in God, 4:14-18.

4:14 - WE HAVE SEEN. *"And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."* People today often claim that the Bible is a book of faith, not facts. As the head of the history department of a well know university said, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are gospels, not history." I refused to compromise. The Gospels are not a chronicle account of everything that happened in the life of Christ, or a history of Israel, but in everything to which it speaks it is historically accurate. Bill O'Reilly has stressed on his program that the New Testament was written for spiritual lessons, but it was never intended to be interpreted as historically accurate.

Well, John states, "We have seen and we testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world." Luke can hardly be misunderstood when he says,

"Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as **the original eyewitnesses** and servants of the word handed them down to us. It also seemed good to me, since **I have carefully investigated everything from the very first**, to write to you in orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed " (Luke 1:1-4, emphasis added).

That sounds like research! Anyone who reads Matthew is well aware of the research he put into the Gospel that bears his name. Mark may have seen the mob that went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, but we know he spent a lot of time with the apostles and other leaders of the early church.

What is it to which John and others testify? It is something of which they were as certain as they were of the feeding of the five thousand or raising of the widow's son at Nain. They had every evidence they needed to know that God sent His Son to be the Savior. In addition to His testimony, they had the indwelling Spirit to bear witness with their spirit. Furthermore, they had the testimony of the Father at the baptism of Jesus and at the Mount of Transfiguration. They accepted the birth of Jesus

as the incarnation of the Son of God. They heard the Sermon on the Mount in person. John stood at the foot of the Cross and saw the open tomb. In fact, he was the first to believe in the Resurrection. He was in the upper room at Pentecost. And, he had an appointment with the Lord on Patmos, which he would have to keep. The Lord was not through with Him yet!

4:15 - JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD. *“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God God remains in him and he in God.”* This is not popular in the land that was once called Christian America. It is too exclusive. People who believe this are narrow and intolerant. The fact is, the truth is very narrow and God is very intolerant. Salvation comes when one confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, and there is absolutely no hope for anyone who does not confess Him.

4:16 - GOD IS LOVE. *“And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.”* When John writes, “we have come to know”, he uses the perfect active indicative, which demands, “we have come to know and still know” the love of God. For this reason, true believers are seen as remaining in Him.

Dutch Shoffner is a retired three star general who at one time commanded an Army combat division in Europe. He was not only well trained, he is obviously brilliant, to which his position with Lockheed Martin for ten years would attest. Dutch read something I sent him on and responded by sharing with me what John 15 means to him. He pointed out the verse in which Jesus said, **“I am the vine; you are the branches.** The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me” (John 15:5). Dutch went on to tell me about going to vineyards in Germany and seeing stumps that are centuries older than America! He said that Americans cannot fully appreciate what Jesus is saying until they see these stumps. The vineyard keepers have been grafting vines, pruning, and nurturing these stumps and the vines growing from them for well over 500 years! They know that the stump is the life of the vine. The vine receives its life from the stump. Furthermore, the quality of the fruit is determined by the quality of the stump. Jesus is the True Vine (Stump), we are the branches. There is no life unless we are remain in Him. We bear no fruit apart from Him. Our life is meaningless apart from Him.

4:17 - LOVE IS PERFECTED. *“In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment; for we are as He is in this world.”* The true believer shares the life of Christ. The late Stephen Olford often emphasized “the Christ-life”, insisting that we may experience that life right now. In a day when spouses are abandoned by one who promised to love them until death parts them, in a day when children are abandoned and often passed from one relative to another, it is especially important to know that they are loved. The greatest love we will ever know is God’s love for us. We are permitted to love Him because He loves us.

CONFIDENCE IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Only in Jesus Christ can there be confidence in the Day of Judgment. We have a personal relationship with our Creator because He loved us enough to give His Son to die for us. When we are saved, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are as secure in judgment as Jesus is! Paul expresses it like this: “Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit’s law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the

law of sin and of death” (Rom. 8:1-2).

4:18 - NO FEAR IN LOVE. *“There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love.”* Love dispels fear and builds confidence and hope. There is no fear in godly love because “perfect love drives out fear.” Vines translates it “casts out” and adds that this is “a strong expression: turneth out of doors. Fear is cast out of the sphere of the fellowship of love” [Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament].

Jesus did not come just to prepare us for another world. He also came to prepare us to live in this world. He does not save us just to take us to heaven or he could save Himself a lot of trouble by taking us home to heaven as soon as we are saved. He wants to get a little of heaven into His children here on earth. We must take on the nature, character, and mission of our Lord. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (v. 18). Faith and fear are incompatible and the presence of one drives out the other. Adrian Rogers used to say, “The faith that falters before the finish was faulty from the first.” There is something to that.

C. Love for God Demands Love for the Brethren, 4:19-21.

4:19 - HE FIRST LOVED US. *“We love because He first loved us.”* God loved us before we even knew Him. Our love for Him is a response to His love for us. God’s love was manifested in His giving His Son to die for our sins (Rom. 5:8). My son Mark loves to sing a beautiful song, *When He Was on the Cross, I Was on His Mind*. That expresses His love for us. It is incomprehensible, but it is undeniable.

4:20 - A LIAR. *“If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”* This is the condition of the third class: one may say this, or suppose one says this. No doubt there are people who profess to love God who do not love their brother, and if they make that claim they are lying. Many Christians can name someone with whom they have gone to church for years who never manifest a genuine love for others, yet they claim to love the Lord. Jesus calls them a liar. There is an old story about a woman who was known to hate her brother-in-law. There was a powerful revival in the church and the woman got under conviction and walked down the aisle when the invitation was given. She told the pastor she was wrong and she had repented. She said that she would like to confess her sin to the church. He let her speak and she announced, “You all now that I have often said that if my brother-in-law died I wouldn’t go to his funeral. Well, I want you to know that after what happened to me tonight, I would be glad to go to his funeral.”

2:21 - THIS COMMAND. *“And we have this command from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother.”* The Second Great Commandment is not a suggestion! It is not a prescription. It is a Command from God. Now, look at **THREE MORE TESTS:**

TEST SIX - “This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1 John 4:2, HCSB).

TEST SEVEN - “We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception” (1 John 4:6, HCSB).

TEST EIGHT - “This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 4:17-21

INTRODUCTION. The Bible has a lot to say about love. As a matter of fact the word “love” appears over 350 times in the Bible. That should not surprise us. Just look at America and consider how the word is used in literature, music, by the entertainment, in counseling, and in speech. We have one word for love in English for love, and the context determines the meaning. That one word expresses romantic love, filial love, brotherly love, and love for life, nature, of beauty in general. In the Greek, there are different words for various kinds of love. There is romantic love, but in the New Testament we are concerned primarily with brotherly love (phileo) and the special kind of love God commands (agape). A misunderstanding of these two loves can confuse even mature believers and leave them with unnecessary guilt. The thing we must remember is that you cannot command romantic love or brotherly love, but God commands a certain kind of love (agape). It can be commanded because it is a mental attitude kind of love - a love that is directed by the mind and will, and not just the heart. The Lord commands us to love people who are not pleasant, not appealing, not even likable. This kind of love (agape) is the what we are dealing with in this passage. It is a love that involves the mind, the feelings, and the will, but it is driven by what we understand to be the will (and command) of the Lord.

I. LOVE IS OUR ASSURANCE AS WE FACE THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, 4:17-18.

A. “By This” Holds Verse 16 Before Us, 17a.

- 1) We come to know His love when we come to know Him.
- 2) God is love.
- 3) To abide in Him is to abide in His love.
- 4) Love is perfected in us when we abide in Him.

B. Love Gives Us Confidence in the Day of Judgment, 17b.

- 1) God does not offer hope to one who has never been born again.
- 2) He wants all who have been saved to live without fear of judgment.
- 3) Fear of judgment is lifted for the mature believer.
- 4) We have this assurance because, “as He is, so also are we in this world.”
 - a. Fear is removed because of God’s love for us.
 - b. Fear is removed because of our love for Him.

- c. Fear is removed even in this world, here and now.
- d. Fear is removed because we are like him, here and now.

C. There Is no Fear in Love, 4:18.

- 1) This applies only to the love God commands and nurtures.
- 2) Many fears are removed in this world through love.
- 3) God's love casts our fear.
- 4) Love removes the fear of punishment.
- 5) "The one who fears is not perfected in love."

Fear is an awesome thing. It weakens, limits the vision, blurs the focus, and paralyzes people when permitted to run its course. It robs of us vitality, it turns our attention inward, it loses sight of others, makes a fruitful person barren, and it creates a dread for any and everything outside our narrow circle of activities and contacts. It may lead one to dread the mail, the door bell, the message on the answering machine. Fear breeds fear, and even those who loath fear within themselves continue to feed and fuel the fear that is robbing them of a meaningful life.

Fear can also be a positive thing. Fear of fire can prevent burns, and fear of speed can prevent serious accidents. Fear of penalties is what prevents some people from breaking the law. A healthy fear of parents, teachers, and others in authority helps restrain undesirable behavior until one has adopted a higher standard of behavior, or until the individual is reborn from within and been filled with the Holy Spirit, which both motivates and empowers him/her to live a life far above what the law requires.

There is a healthy fear of God and an unhealthy fear of God. The lost person, or the backslidden believer may live in fear of the judgment of God, and that fear can (and should) lead him to repent. That kind of fear is good. However, the fear of God that anticipates punishment for sins long forgiven is unhealthy. A man once told me he had lain in bed the night before and counted thirty nine women with whom he had committed adultery. His wife was then struggling with the cancer that would take her life and he was feeling guilty. What he had done was horrible, but once he received forgiveness, God could no longer remember those sins (judicially). What this man should have remembered is the grace of God that was greater than even his sins.

This verse tells us that "the one who fears is not perfected in love." Fear hinders the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Sanctification. Let us not be afraid to use the term. Sanctification is not a term we should surrender to those who use it all the time but may not understand it. Paul wrote, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." (Rom. 8:29). You want a good, clear, concise definition of Sanctification? Here it is: becoming "conformed to the image of His Son." Becoming Christ-like. This is a process which begins at the point of our salvation (Justification) and continues until our Glorification. Justification is once for all, Sanctification is progressive. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are being conformed more and more to the image of Jesus Christ. This is a process, a daily growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This process by which we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ is hindered by fear, but enhanced in an atmosphere of love. This love is not a warm fuzzy feeling, but obedience to the God Who first loved us and then commanded us to love Him and to love other people. If you fear what another person might do to you, or say about you, your love for that person is going to be a serious challenge. If you really love that person with the right kind of love, that love will overcome the fear. Love and fear cannot thrive in the same environment. Commit yourself to the Lord and He will give you a victory in love and a victory over fear.

II. WE LOVE, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US, 4:19.

A. The Highest Motivation for Loving God Is His Love for Us.

- 1) The Highest Motivation for Loving Others Is His Love for Us.
- 2) The Second Highest Motivation for Loving God Is Our Love for Him.
- 3) The Second Highest Motivation for Loving Others Is Our Love for God.
- 4) The Third Highest Motivation for Loving Others Is Our Love for them.

B. You Cannot Love God and Hate Your Brother, 4:20.

- 1) "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar."
- 2) You can more logically love one whom you can see than One you cannot see.

John expresses it like this: "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen".

C. We Are Commanded to Love God - That Is the First Great Commandment.

D. We Are Commanded to Love Others - That Is the Second Great Commandment.

John writes, "And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."

We love God with a mental attitude love, a love that considers the Person, Character, and Nature of Almighty God and seeks to respond to Him as obedient servants who have adopted the attitude of His Own beloved Son: "Not my will but thy will be done." This love is not without emotions, but it is not driven by emotions. It is not driven by emotions, though it is driven to emotions. The more we understand the love of God for us the better we will be able to love him. The better we understand His love for other people the better we will be able to honor his commandment to love them as we love our self.

James Madison, the Father of our Constitution, was a man of faith. His statements on the fact that this country was founded on Scriptural principles has been edited out of the revised history text books, along with parts of George Washington's farewell address. These were men of faith. Less well known is the faith of many of the leading women of the pe-

riod. A few, like Martha Washington and Dolly Madison, have received a lot of attention. Dolly Madison, wife of the fourth president of the United States, was one of the most popular women in American history. Wherever she went, she charmed and captivated everyone obscure and well-known, rich and poor, men and women alike.

She was once asked to explain the secret of her power over others. Surprised by the question Mrs. Madison exclaimed, "Power over people. I have none. I desire none. I merely love everyone." And those who love are richly rewarded by love returned [BI].

God would have us love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He would have us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. And, He would have us appreciate fully His love for us and the love we receive from others.

CONCLUSION. John wrote, "And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." Now, what I would urge you to do today is to confess that you need to grow in your love for our Lord and for others - if you are satisfied, you are not going to get much from this message. If you confess that you need help, the Holy Spirit is ready to bless you with a greater capacity for love and open for you more vistas and possibilities for joy and fulfillment than you have ever imagined possible. He wants to bless you and this is the starting place.

CHAPTER FIVE

I. CERTAIN EXPERIENCES AFFIRM OUR SALVATION, 5:1-17.

A. The Scripture Reveals the Nature and Meaning of Faith, 5:1-5.

"This is the victory that has conquered the world: **our faith**" (1 John 5:4b). Faith has been described as "an experience with reality that exercises a person's ability to know, to appraise and appreciate solid value and to act by decision of the will" (notes from a retired pastor).

5:1 - JESUS IS THE MESSIAH. *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent also loves his child."* This is the acid test You must believe that Jesus is the Messiah to be saved. Furthermore, to love the Father is to love the Son. A. T. Robertson, who always dug a little deeper than most, offered the following comments:

That Jesus is the Christ (*hoti Iêsous estin ho Christos*). The Corinthian antichrist denies the identity of Jesus and Christ (1Jn 2:22). Hence John insists on this form of faith (*pisteuôn* here in the full sense, stronger than in **1Jn 3:23**; **1Jn 4:16**, seen also in *pistis* in verse **1Jn 5:4**, where English and Latin fall down in having to use another word for the verb) as he does in verse **1Jn 5:5** and in accord with the purpose of John's Gospel (**John 20:31**). *Nothing less will satisfy John, not merely intellectual conviction, but full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour* [Word Pictures in the NT, emphasis added].

I might add that nothing less than full surrender to Jesus Christ can be called faith. Anything less is wishful thinking. If we make it clear that faith involves this kind of surrender we might see fewer drop-outs. There are a lot more people who believe that Jesus lived and died for our sins than there are who surrender in faith to Him and accept His lordship over their lives. Jesus never offers Himself to anyone as Savior who is not willing to accept Him as Lord. He is either Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

5:2 - THIS IS HOW WE KNOW. *“This is how we know that we love God’s children when we love God and obey His commands.”* This is **TEST NINE**, the final test in the First Epistle of John for proof of our salvation. Once again, assurance of salvation is offered in the Scripture and through the Holy Spirit. Those who know the Lord can know that they know Him. In fact, if God takes every step necessary to provide you with assurance, to reject it would imply either sin through ignorance (not making the effort to know) or rebellion (rejecting His Word and His Spirit).

The salvation experience gives the believer a new nature, a disposition of love. Christian love moves us toward:

- 1) Greater love for God.
- 2) Greater love for others.
- 3) Greater loyalty to the commandments of God.

Compare that the self-love, self-worth, self-esteem claims of pop-psychology that began to take roots in our culture a generation or two ago. That was the attitude of the “better red than dead” attitude of young men who fled to Canada rather than fight for their country in the sixties, but would not find full expression for another decade or two. When social scientists began to understand the attitude they were seeing they labeled that generation the “Me Generation.” According to a Baptist Press release (10/11/06), many young people are active in youth groups while in their teens but drop out in their twenties.

We probably should not be surprised. When I was a teenager we had no bus, no family life center, no trips to Centrifuge, no budget for youth activities, no youth choir, and no youth minister. What do you do for young people who are so deprived? What our church did was give us the Word of God. Many parents are so concerned for their young people that they choose a church based on the question, “What are you doing for young people?” They shop around until they find the church with the most trips, the greatest facilities, the most charismatic youth minister, and the music to which they have become addicted in the world, and they join that church. Then if their teenagers come in and tell them they are having a better dog and pony show down the road they head to another church, often paying little attention to the denomination.

Some churches respond to these parents and their teenagers with what ever they demand. If their parents want a church that will keep them busy they believe it will keep them out of trouble. One pastor made the statement; “Their church is doing a better job marketing young people than we are.” They provide fun things for them and season it with a devotional thought. They graduate from high

school and head for college and before long they drop out. They have no foundation.

Over and over, we turn on the news to reports of yet another teen aged girl or college aged girl who has suddenly disappeared. The attractive young woman who is reporting says, she was partying with friends in a bar - but that's normal for college students. It may be normal for the lost college student, but it should never be normal for the Christian young person. Yet, we find that the young lady who was drinking with friends at the bar was active in her youth group at home. Love for Jesus Christ will keep young people, including college students, out of bars and motivate them to witness to their friends. Does a Christian show love by participating in sinful activities with their friends or by witnessing to them for the Lord? The answer should be very clear to us.

5:3 - LOVE FOR GOD. *"For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden."* This is a clear and succinct definition of love for God - obeying Him. As Samuel told Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and obedience than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15). Once again, ". T. Robertson has done the word study for us:

Explanatory use of *hina* with *hautê*, as in John 17:3, to show what "the love of God" (1Jn 4:9, 12) **in the objective sense is, not mere declamatory boasting** (1Jn 4:20), but **obedience to God's commands**, "that we keep on keeping (present active subjunctive as in 1Jn 2:3) his commandments." **This is the supreme test.** [Word Pictures in the New Testament, emphasis added].

The Sermon Notebook - John 5:1-3

INTRODUCTION. If you have the Kingdom of God in your heart you ought to live in the heart of the Kingdom. Many people who profess to have the Kingdom in their heart do not live in the heart of the Kingdom but on the borderline. They have spent so much time on the borderline that it is hard to distinguish them from the people on the other side. I might add that they often look like them, dress like them, and sometimes smell like them! If you have the Kingdom in your heart God expects you to live in the heart of the Kingdom, and He enables you to do it.

Several months ago I received a tape from Dr. Jimmy Draper, President of LifeWay Christian Resources. As a member of the Board of Trustees I receive a lot of mail from Dr. Draper, but I do not recall receiving a cassette tape - a video tape or two, but not an audio tape. I listened to the taped message in which Dr. Draper informed denominational leaders that LifeWay would begin a fresh emphasis on the Kingdom of God. Then, he got my attention when he announced that in all his years in the ministry he had never preached but one sermon on the Kingdom of God, and that was a sermon he preached at some state convention when the subject had been assigned. Dr. Draper had checked and said that he had often referred to the Kingdom of God but he had never preached another sermon specifically on the Kingdom. My first thought was that his statement was a horrifying indictment of my on sermon record. I have often preached about the Kingdom of God, but as far as I know I have not preached one sermon wholly on the subject.

In 5:1-3, we are going to focus on three specific things that are essential to a child of the Kingdom of God. The first is on BEING A CHILD OF GOD. The second is on LOVING GOD AND OTHERS. The third emphasis is on OBEYING GOD. These are some of the characteristics of the Kingdom focused believer.

I. WHOEVER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST IS BORN OF GOD, 1:1a.

A. This Verse Tells Us Who Is a Christian.

A Christian is one who believes that Jesus is the Christ. He must believe in the God of the Bible. Today we must be very careful to emphasize that. We are not talking about some generic god of nature, a universal god of good will. When I began in the ministry I could walk up to a door and knock or ring a door bell and know I would be invited in, shown a comfortable chair offered coffee and cake, and treated as a guest. Of course there were some exceptions, but not many. This applied both to Christians and lost people. If I asked, "Do you believe in God", they never asked which god. If I asked, "Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God", I expected them to respond, "I know He is." If I asked, "Do you believe this Bible is the Word of God", I expected them to answer in the affirmative, and then tell me how much it meant to their mother or father. You have to do a lot more probing today with some people to be sure you are talking about the same God, or the same Jesus. And when it comes to the Word of God, you might get less debate from lost people than from some church members, especially some "religious leaders" (like the priests who defended their election of a homosexual as a bishop - they said, "The Bible is not our authority").

A Christian is one who believes the God of Creation is the God of our Redemption and that the only way anyone can be saved is through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Look with me at some of the most familiar verses in all the Bible:

"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

"That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).
"For WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED" (Rom. 10:13).

B. This Verse Also Tells Us Who Is not a Christian.

- 1) A Christian is not one who simply believes that there is a god.
(the devil believes and trembles)
- 2) A Christian is not one who simply believes in an historical Jesus.
(Like Caesar, Jesus was an important historical figure but I can know that and not be a Christian)
- 3) A Christian is not simply one who believes in a New Age Jesus.
(You are not God, and you are not your own Christ)
- 4) A Christian is not simply one who believes in a Mormon Jesus.
(The Jesus of Mormonism is not the Jesus of Scripture)
- 5) A Christian is not simply one who believes in the Jesus Jehovah's Witnesses proclaim.
(Jesus is not "a" god, He is the expressed image of God the Father)

II. THE CHILD OF THE FATHER LOVES HIM AND THE CHILDREN BORN TO HIM, 1:b-2.

“And whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.”

A. If We Love the Father We Will Love Other Children of Our Father, 1:b.

This answers the question we may have raised in 4:19-21. In 4:21, we read, “And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” This does not say that the one who has been born again will have a warm, fuzzy feeling for everyone meets. This is a love that can be commanded - and it is commanded. You cannot command romantic love and you cannot command a close personal friendship kind of love. Yet God commands us to love one another. How can that be? Obviously, there must be a kind of love that can be commanded, because this is certainly not a simple suggestion. God commands it and holds us accountable for it.

God can command a love that can be directed by the mind, a mental attitude kind of love. I know God loved me enough to give His only begotten Son to die for me. I know God loves my brother or sister. I know He enables me to love my brother and he commands me to do it. I must seek the highest good for other people. For the lost person that is his salvation. For the saved that is whatever he or she needs.

B. Here Is Another Proof of Our Salvation, 5:2.

1) If we are children of God we will love God.

John offers many proofs that one is a child of God, but none can be more important than our love for God and our love for others, especially other believers. This is not a generic love for all things nice and beautiful, and it is not a natural response to One Who has blessed us - it is a supernatural response to Him, or at the very least, a love consistent with one's new nature in Christ. My son tried to explain to his little three years old daughter Abigail why he and her mother would be taking the bread and grape juice when they observed the Lord's Supper, but that she could not take them. After a few comments he painted himself into a corner: “We will take them because we love Jesus.” Abigail began to cry, and with her hands over her eyes, said, “But I love Jesus, too!” Small children love to sing “Jesus Loves Me” and if they will tell you that they love Jesus. However, when they become children of God that love takes on a whole new dimension. When we become children of God we take on the nature and character of our Father. When we become citizens of the Kingdom of God we take on the nature and character of our King.

2) If we are children of God we will love other children of God.

Let me stress this one thing: we do not get to be children of God by doing good things for others any more than we get to be Christians by doing good things or by abstaining from evil things. The point is that if we are Children of God we are both empowered and motivated to love our brothers and sisters. We will manifest the love God has given us for others in practical ways. We will seek to do good because it honors and glorifies our Lord, and we will seek to avoid evil because it dishonors the God, Who loves us and permits us to love Him.

ILLUSTRATION: If you have ever attended a conference at Glorieta, New Mexico, you have probably been to the dining hall. And if you have been to the dining hall lately you have

seen the life-sized bronze of Bob ("Coop") Cooper, standing there pouring coffee for someone - something he has done for more than a quarter of a century. I have had a number of conversations with Coop and before leaving the Tuesday evening banquet for members of the board of trustees (September, 2003), I arrived early and went into the dining area to thank him for all his help. He was appreciative and shared a little of his testimony with me. He was a successful business man in Dallas. At age fifty-six he sold his company to a larger company and moved to Glorietta where he has served as a volunteer for ever since - he is now eighty-one years old. No one can visit with Coop without a sincere appreciation for his love for God and his love for them.

He told me that someone came in during the summer and recognized him after having seen his "statue" outside. The young person exclaimed, "I thought you were dead!" Not many living persons have statues of themselves erected such a prominent place and that is a testimony to Coop's love for the Lord and for all of us. Coop not only pours coffee, he checks to see if there is anything else you need. He went to get me a piece of pie, and in a few minutes came back and asked if he could take it and put it in the microwave for a minute - and he did. These are little things but anyone with any spirit of discernment knows Coop loves the Lord and when you are in his presence you know he loves you. He has taken on the character and nature of the King of Kings, the character of the Kingdom.

III. CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM OBEY THE KING, 1:3.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

A. "For This Is The Love of God" Explains the Love God Commands, 1:3a.

The citizen of this world may love the environment, serve others, love law and order, make a major contribution to his country and to his fellow man. Many lost people spent endless hours serving others, supporting charities, attending benefits, rescuing animals from the roadside, and serving the underprivileged. and we are all better off because of it. We must give them credit. The citizen of the Kingdom of God, however, takes on the character of the King. His love will manifest the love of his or her heavenly Father in such a way that others will glorify our Father, not just praise us.

B. Citizens of the Kingdom Keep the Commandments of the King, 1:3b.

If you are a child of God you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and if you are a citizen of the Kingdom, God is your King! Who is your King? If you have no king, you are not a part of the Kingdom of God. If you have been born again by the grace of God, you have been justified, and you are now being sanctified - defined in Romans eight as "being conformed to the image" of Jesus Christ. We are being made like Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We are being conformed to the image of our King. I thank God we do not have to die to be a citizen of His Kingdom, and we do not have to die to be conformed to the nature and character of our Savior.

Obedience is expected of every citizen of the Kingdom and the desire to obey the King motivates us to honor Him. Jimmy Draper told of the man who came to him to try to get his approval for leaving his wife for someone else whom he thought could make him happy. Dr. Draper said, "God does not want you happy, He wants you obedient!" That is basically what Samuel told King Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15).

C. His Commandments Are not a Burden to the Citizens of the Kingdom.

ILLUSTRATION: Greg Dunn gave me permission to share his testimony, a testimony he shared with our church on the sixth anniversary of his remarkable re-birth. Every one present knew about his alcoholism, drug addiction, immorality, and other ungodly things. He told our people how he came to my house one Sunday night, hoping that I would say something to help him overcome some fear that held him in its grip.

What I will never forget, which he never mentions, is that he was very disturbed by muscle spasms in his stomach. He pulled up his shirt and I could see his stomach muscles jerking. I took him across to my study and let him talk with me for some time. Then, with full awareness that I could not do anything about the physical manifestation, I began to talk with him about God's love for him, that He gave His only begotten Son to die for him. Greg pulled up his shirt and ask, "But what about this?" The muscles were still jerking, and I knew I had no answer for that. I asked if we could come back to that a little later, knowing that I would have to refer him to his doctor.

Greg began to listen - I mean really listen. That night he confessed his sin and asked the Lord to save him. Now what I did not know was that while we were talking after he had asked the Lord to save him is what was going on in Greg's mind. On the sixth anniversary of his re-birth he told me he was sitting there thinking, "Okay, I will give up the drugs, but I can still go to the bars with my daddy, and I can still do all the other things I was doing. I just want to get off the drugs." He had been frightened when he came close to losing his girlfriend to drugs. He had been going to Dallas and buying drugs from the Mexican mafia and he told me that after he was arrested he looked around from the back seat of the police car and thought, "This looks just like it does on TV!"

Greg was determined to pick and choose the sins he wanted to keep in his life and the ones he was willing to give up. However, when he went home he got out his Bible and began to read. The more he read the more he realized that God wanted him to give up all the sins that had been so important to him. He told us that when he went to his mother's house immediately after he was saved he told them that God wanted him to preach. At first, he had not wanted to give up all of his old lifestyle. People loved his parties and they loved being around him when he was entertaining. He was the life of the party. He had loved the tailgate parties, complete with girls, alcohol, and drugs. He wanted to be freed from the addiction but he did not want to give up all the sin. Before he went to bed that night he came to understand that God wanted his complete obedience.

Greg today can communicate with young people and young adults as few believers can. The Lord is using him, and the fact that he can speak the language and understand the heart of those who are today engaged in the activities from which the Lord has freed him.

You see, at first, Greg wanted to choose the areas of his obedience, but he did not want to be fully obedient to the Lord. Then he came to the conclusion as he read his Bible and prayed that God wanted his complete obedience. Finally, he reached the point that God's commands are no longer a burden to him and he is celebrating that deliverance every day.

CONCLUSION. What is God's message for me from this Scripture? "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." If you have never received Jesus as your Savior He wants you to confess your sins, repent of them, and receive Jesus into your heart. If you have already done that, He wants you to

obey Him and walk with Him daily as he conforms you to the nature and character of His Son, Jesus Christ. He wants to mold you and develop you as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. If you will permit Him to do that, you will be blessed beyond anything this world can possibly comprehend. You will receive all the benefits of the faithful citizen of the kingdom of God. The greatest blessing is fellowship with the King. Another blessing is that of being conformed to the nature and character of our Savior.

5:4 - THE VICTORY. *“Because whatever has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.”* A World” here is the realm of godless human society under the rule of Satan. “Overcome (present tense) the world” - There is a continuous struggle which requires a deep faith. For the lost person, faith is a prerequisite to salvation. To the Christian, faith is a prerequisite to victory over the world, spiritual maturity, and joy that knows no bounds.

5:5 - WHO CONQUERS THE WORLD. *“And who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* There is only one way to overcome the world, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ. In this verse, both His humanity (“Jesus”) and His deity (“the Son of God”) are emphasized.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 5:4-5

INTRODUCTION. God loves the world. The world is at enmity with God. Am I to love the world that hates God? Am I to hate the world God loves? How can I love the world and hate the world at the same time? The better we understand the Word of God the less of a paradox we have here. There is no contradiction, once we identify the world God loves and distinguish it from the world He hates - the world that would destroy us for no better reason than that it hates our God.

We often hear of a child or young people who has lost his or her innocence. I don't know if it was a matter of innocence or naiveté, but America lost something on 9-11-01. You will never forget where you were and what you were doing when it was announced that terrorists had attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and that there was an aborted attempt to attack the White House. September 10, 2003, I had an opportunity to thank Janet Henley of Maryland for her closing prayer at the end of a very long day of meetings at Glorieta Conference Center. I thanked her for blessing me with her prayer and then reminded her that she was the one who told me why people were standing around in the parking lot in front of the building where we were to meet on 9-11-01. None of us will ever forget that day. We now know that we have an enemy that hates us with a passion the Western World cannot fully comprehend.

Today, I want to do everything in my power to convince you that we have another enemy, a very dangerous enemy, an enemy that seeks to destroy us. This is an enemy directed by a power far more dangerous than Osama Ben Laden or Saddam Hussein. James identifies that enemy for us: “know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? who-soever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Today, we will not stop with identifying this enemy, we learn how we can win a victory over this deadly foe. I am praying that in the power of the Holy Spirit I can convince you that this enemy of God really is your enemy. This enemy is having a lot more success in subverting America and canceling the witness of the church than Islam. But first, let us look at

the text:

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

I. THERE IS A WORLD TO LOVE AND A WORLD TO OVERCOME.

A. There Is the World God Loves, John 3:16.

God created the physical world and He loves what He created. He created human beings in His own image and placed them in on the one planet best suited for them. God loves the creature He created in His Own image. He created every creature in the world and He created them for His pleasure and for ours. It is understandable that He would love the earth and all that He created to inhabit it.

The First Epistle of John is a testimony to God’s love for us. He loves us enough to save us, adopt us into His family, and permit us to call Him our Father. First John is a wonderful and glorious epistle, an epistle of hope, assurance, and joy. So, why would John insert a passage about an enemy that seeks to dishonor God, pollute worship, and corrupt people? God wants you to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Once you know Him, He wants you to know that you know Him. Fear, doubt, and anxiety dishonor the Lord and rob the believer of joy, hope, and spiritual vitality. Faith is the very antithesis of fear and doubt.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved by grace through faith. He also wrote, “The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). We are saved by grace through faith (faith God provides through the revelation of his redemptive love for us). Then the saved must live by grace through faith. By grace we are saved, and by grace we are assured of “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 4-5).

The person who is saved by the grace of God is given the great privilege of living by faith, and in faith. We are not only given that privilege, we are expected to live by faith. As a matter of fact, that is the only way a Christian can live without being a backslider. By faith we walk in the Spirit, but in doubt we walk in the flesh. One honors the Lord, the other serves the devil. Without faith we are shackled by the world’s pride, doubt, and fear. That is no way for a Christian to live.

B. There Is the World We Should Love.

There is an old saying that the friend of my friend is my friend, and the enemy of my friend is my enemy. We should love what God loves and hate what He hates. This is not a natural thing, and the unsaved person cannot really comprehend the significance of it. Certain things are spiritually discerned, as Paul sought to teach the Corinthian church.

We should love the physical world God created. Enjoy the beauty of God’s creation and preserve it. If you love what God loves you do not abuse it, you do not misuse it, you do not litter it, you do not exploit it. In other words, Christians should be the best ecologists in the world. Yet, we do not worship the world. We understand the difference between human beings and lower animal life.

Nothing dishonors God like the theory of evolution - and it is still a theory, regardless of how many scientist tell us evolution has been proved. There was but one Person alive today who was there, and He tells us He created all things, and we have His account in the Book of Genesis. Now, let me stress one other point: if you want to sell people on abortion, euthanasia, or genetic engineering, first sell them on evolution. All evolutionists are not abortionists but evolutions devalues human life. Also, if God is not the Creator at the beginning you will not stand before Him as Judge at the end.

Not only should we love the physical world God created, we should love others who are created in the image of God. Then the Bible says that "God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life", it is talking about the human beings who inhabit the world. If our heavenly Father love them we should love them.

C. There Is the World That Is at Enmity with God.

In the accounts of the kings of Israel and Judah, we find something very interesting. In the first place, King David was a man after God's Own heart. In the second place, the best of the kings that followed him were held up by the standard set by David. We only have to look at one practice to see what set David apart from the other kings of his day. Whenever there was a decision to be made David "inquired of the Lord." He never bent his knee to any other god. It has been one thousand years since there had been a king like that - that was Melchizedek, the priest/king of Salem to whom Abraham paid his tithe.

The Bible tells us that some kings did that which was evil. Some did that which was righteous, though not like David. Then there were Hezekiah and Josiah who, like David, did that which was righteous throughout their reign. Then we come to Manasseh, who was more evil than any other king Judah would know. In fact, you had to go back to Ahab, king of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, to find a king as evil as Manasseh. Now consider some of the things Manasseh did and then see if there are modern parallels in America (Kings 21).

- 1) He did evil in the sight of the LORD
- 2) He did abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.
- 3) For he rebuilt the high places (for pagan worship) which Hezekiah his father had destroyed.
- 4) He erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah (he supported pagan gods).
- 5) He worshiped all the host of heaven and served them (astrology, idolatry).
- 6) And he built altars in the house of the LORD (desecrated the house of the Lord).
- 7) He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.
- 8) He made his son pass through the fire (that is child sacrifice).
- 9) He practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists.

While no one man has so corrupted America, I challenge you to consider how we have moved incrementally from the Christian foundation upon which this country was established to the point that many no longer believe America was founded on Biblical principles. Look what has happened in recent years.

- 1) Leaders are doing that which is evil - some of them have occupied the White House.
- 2) The abominations of pagan nations are practiced - and defended by the media.
- 3) Christianity is under attack but other religions are glorified.
- 4) Pagan religions, like Islam and Hinduism are spreading across this land.

- 5) Occult practices are proliferating (we entertain our children with it!).
- 6) So-called Christian cults are growing by leaps and bounds (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses).
- 7) Churches are being corrupted (One priest proclaimed, "the Bible is not our authority!").
- 8) Millions of unborn babies have been sacrificed on the altar of expedience.

D. We Must Overcome the World that Is at Enmity with God.

We will overcome the world, or be overcome by it. But what is the world that is at enmity with God? God loves the physical universe and He loves those created in His image. What exactly is the world that hates God and hates what God loves? It is the fallen world order that has been subjugated by Satan, who is appropriately called the prince of this world. He is the bitter enemy of God who will corrupt and pollute and destroy. He is also the great deceiver, a liar from the very beginning, who will control even some who think they are serving God; he will have some hating God, and others thinking they are gods!

That is not the worst of it. He so deceives fallen man that even many Christians cannot distinguish the world they should hate and the world they should love. I remember how disturbed I was when I discovered that with each new season the television industry deliberately sought to "push the envelop" to see how much society would accept. Each season the language got worse, the romantic scenes more revolting, and the dress more suggestive. They moved from the strapless bathing suit to the suitless bathing strap.

Francis Schaeffer wrote during those days that there was something that should have concerned us far more than four letter words, as bad as they were. That was the philosophy that was being taught by the writers and producers of these programs. There was an assault on Christianity, but that assault was introduced so gradually that most of us were unaware of what was happening.

If you cannot identify the enemy, how can you fight it? Only those who are grounded in the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit will be able to identify the word that is at enmity with God, and with His church. When someone seeks to portray Islam as a peaceful religion, do not be deceived. When Muslim clerics met recently, according to one report, they never condemned Islamic terrorists or terrorism, they discussed things like how to deal with the FBI! We must understand that not only is radical Islam is the enemy of America, but Islam in all its expressions is the enemy of Jesus Christ. And every politician and talking head on the evening news who seeks to penalize Christians in order to keep Muslims and atheists from being uncomfortable is a part of the world that is at enmity with God.

Whatever the attitude, philosophy, or religion that has made America a more crude, profane, vile, and dangerous society is an expression of the world that has set itself against God and all that is godly. And the prince of this world is Satan, who has been celebrating victory after victory as prayer and Bible reading were removed from public schools, and as the Ten Commandments are removed from public display. The world tells us America has never been a Christian nation. The founders, however, tell us that it was founded on New Testament principles.

The world is not content to work from outside the church to destroy it, it will also work from within it. It began with subtle questions about the Word of God, but then moved from deceptive questions to open attacks. As early as the 1950s, Francis Schaeffer predicted that the next great battlefield in Christianity would be the Scripture. God says it is His Word, Satan says it is not, and the world seeks to lead us to a compromise that leaves everyone

happy. This is how a very dignified and sophisticated Christian lady judge could smile and tell me she liked my book on Philippians, "But I normally don't like Paul." Then she gave me that smile that assumed that every thinking Christian understands that "Paul was strictly a product of his time." She did not seem to understand when I tried to explain that the Pauline Epistles were the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, they did not originate with Paul.

The world has promoted alcohol, drugs, homosexuality, and abortion, especially since America entered the post-Christian era in our history. Sadly, it is receiving a lot of support from many church members. One church elected an open homosexual as a bishop and then went on television to openly, almost arrogantly, defend their action.

Former Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch was asked if there were any surprises at the annual convention in Greensboro, NC, in 2006. He said that when a number of Baptist pastors went to a mic and spoke in favor of drinking alcoholic beverages that was a surprise. When Bobby Welch met with the LifeWay Christian Resources board of trustees in February of 2005, I was convinced that he was God's man for the hour. He really distinguished himself, even against the backdrop of many outstanding past presidents. A former Green Beret, Bobby knew how to get things done. He also knows how to cut through the haze that seems to confuse some issues. For example, he said, "I understand that one pastor's blog site indicates he believes his drinking assists him in soul-winning! What a pathetic joke! These blogging Baptist pastors just blew their collective cork!"

II. THAT WHICH OVERCOMES THE WORLD IS OUR FAITH.

A. Jesus Overcame the World.

Jesus was the Agent of creation (Gen. 1 and John 1), so mastery of the physical world was no challenge to Him. He could say with the Father, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10). When we say that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, we must recall that Jesus declared, "I and my Father are One." As absolute Master over the physical universe, seas and rivers divided so that two million people could cross on dry land. Iron axe heads floated, disobedient kings were stricken with leprosy, the shadow on Hezekiah's sundial backed up fifteen degrees. Barren women conceived and gave birth to sons, two godly men were taken up to heaven without having to die, water was turned to bread, and two different men went forty days without food (Moses and Elijah, and later Jesus did the same thing). There is more: planets move in orbits around suns in fifty billion solar systems, if we can trust the astrophysicists

Why, then should we be surprised when a virgin conceived of the Holy Spirit and delivered a baby who was born King, one Who will one day return to the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Jesus changed water to wine, walked on water, and raised the dead. Why, then should anyone have a problem with the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead.

B. Jesus Will Judge the World.

Jesus did not come to judge the world the first time: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17). But there is a day coming when He will judge the world: "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having fur-

nished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts. 17:31). Jesus is the One of whom Peter wrote: "they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Peter 4:5).

C. God Will Destroy the World that Is at Enmity with Him.

The physical world will be destroyed: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away" (2 Peter 3:10). This is shocking but God's judgment will not end with the physical universe, as Jesus clearly reveals in Rev. 20:11-15. You and I will not only agree with His judgment, we will participate in it. Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2).

D. God Will Give Us a Victory Over the World.

We are instructed not to be "... conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12;20). Christians should never permit themselves to be conformed to the world order that is in rebellion against God. Paul wrote, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12).

It was also Paul who wrote, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). We are promised victory over the world because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. God wants you be victorious over the world, and He empowers you for victory.

E. The Key to Our Victory Over the World Is Our Faith.

1) This is not a generic faith that everything is going to come out all right. The lost person has faith in certain things. He trusts the laws of nature, he trusts economic advisories, he trusts the stock market reports, he trusts the new media, he trusts people he has come to admire. He may even trust in some things that are supernatural, but if he does, his faith is very limited. The mature Christian trusts His Lord because of what has been revealed about him through His Word, what is being revealed about Him through the Holy Spirit, and because of his personal relationship with Him.

2) This is not a faith you can generate. The faith that overcomes the world is a gift from God, just as surely as the faith that embraces Jesus Christ as Savior is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). You cannot generate this faith, but our Lord makes it available to all who will receive it. Our problem is that we had rather admire certain people who have manifested great faith than to pay the price to receive that faith ourselves. I had rather admire the faith of a David Brainerd than to sacrifice my life, my comfort, my associations, and even my recreation to carry out the Great Commission.

3) This faith only comes from God. Faith comes through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we are saved the Lord puts His Spirit in our heart to guide, instruct, and empower us that we might honor the Lord. He convicts us of sin, convinces us of the righteousness - the lost that he might be saved, and the saved that he might grow in His grace and knowledge. He enlightens our minds that we may understand and apply the Word of God. But there is more. Listen to these words the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write:

"And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: >How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, >Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:15-17).

Hearing here refers to the preaching of the Word by God called, Christ filled, Holy Spirit anointed preachers of the Word. That takes nothing away from Bible reading, Bible study, or memorization of Scripture. What it does is hold before us the high place God has given to the preaching of His Word by those He has called to do so. De-emphasis of preaching has caused a serious faith vacuum in the church in America.

CONCLUSION. You are not going to overcome the world unless you can identify the world that is an war with God and His church. You are not going to be victorious unless you understand that we are at war with Satan, the flesh, and the World. We tend to admire men and women of faith - but seldom really apply that to our own experience. Some had rather pay some faith healer to pray for healing that to pay the price to pray a prayer that God will hear. We will pay missionaries to go to Africa or Asia with the Word, but we will not cross the road to share the message of salvation with a lost neighbor. We may admire certain people who have overcome the world through their faith without realizing that God has equipped us and empowered us to overcome the world. Every single believer can overcome the world, and everyone who overcomes the world does so the same way. That is by faith, and God supplies the faith.

Here is the beauty of this. You may have failed, you may have stumbled, you may have been disgusted with your past mistakes, but our Lord will forgive you if you will repent and commit yourself to Him. He will restore you and empower you so that you will live victoriously.

B. The Christian Is Empowered By the Holy Spirit, 5:6-12.

5:6 - JESUS CHRIST. *"Jesus Christ He is the One who came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."* New Testament scholars teach us that this refers to the Incarnation as a definite historic event: the preexistent Son of God was sent from heaven to do God's will. The Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, became flesh and blood so that He could become the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

THE SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Triune God-head. He is Deity (God), not simply divine (like God), and anyone who has experienced salvation through Jesus Christ has experienced the Holy Spirit. You do not Aget the Holy Spirit" trough some second blessing. The Holy Spirit was a witness to the Incarnate Son.

5:7 - THREE. *"For there are three that testify."* The number three is the divine number (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit): one in essence, three in Person. It is not unusual to see the number three associated with God at any place in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. The word Trinity is not found in the Bible but the concept is found throughout the Book.

5:8 - SPIRIT. *“The Spirit, the water, and the blood and these three are in agreement.”* We have the three fold, abiding witness of the Spirit: (1) The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, (2) water points to baptism, and (3) blood denotes death (of Christ). Here we have the same three witnesses of verses 1 John 5:6, 7 (with the Spirit listed first). The three agree as one bring us to faith in Jesus as the Incarnate Son of God, which is the expressed purpose for which John was inspired to write his Gospel account of Christ (John 20:31).

5:9 - GOD’S TESTIMONY. *“If we accept the testimony of men, God’s testimony is greater, because it is God’s testimony that He has given about His Son.”* The phrase, “If we accept the testimony of men” is the condition of first class, meaning that it is assumed to be true. This meets the criteria for a legally valid witness are laid down in Law (Deut 19:15). The testimony of men is accepted in court, as well as in other settings. God’s testimony is far superior to the testimony of men. Man is fallible, God is infallible. Men recorded the teachings and miracles, but they could only record eyewitness testimony or hear-say testimony, either of which may be challenged. Only God can give perfect testimony concerning His Son. For example, only God can testify that Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Only God can testify to the role of His Son in end-time events. Listen to God’s testimony on the comparison between the Creator and the creature:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.” [This is] the Lord’s declaration. For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For just as rain and snow fall from heaven, and do not return there without saturating the earth, and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and will prosper in what I send it [to do]” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

5:10 - THE ONE WHO BELIEVES. *“The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given about His Son.”* The emphasis here is upon our personally believing in Jesus Christ and our believing facts about Jesus. “Since God authenticates Jesus Christ’s ministry through the witness of the Spirit, those who accept God’s testimony believe (*pisteuo*, Gk.) in Christ. An individual cannot trust God and deny Christ. Those who reject Christ repudiate God, calling Him a >liar’ (cf. 1:10). No one can come to the Father outside of Jesus (cf. John 14:6) [BSB].

It should be stressed that no one can “find” God through study, research, or browsing through supernatural mazes. It must also be stated that no one is going to accidentally “miss” God. Some people brilliant while others are slow to grasp theories and principles. Some people are rebellious and others are receptive. Some are more open to new thoughts than others. Some stubbornly resist anything new. Does that give some an advantage over others? Those who grow up in a Christian home and in Sunday School are exposed to the Gospel when they are more receptive than others. At the same time, God does not leave the revelation of His redemptive purpose to chance or to man’s intuition and discovery. As Paul reveals in Romans 1, God takes the initiative in revealing Himself to man in such a way that no one is excused who rejects Him. Salvation does not come to those who “lucks out” in some cosmic game of chance. God takes the initiative in revealing His salvation. Specifici-

cally, He reveals that salvation comes through faith in Jesus. Anyone who refuses the Son makes the father a liar. This is strong language, but He is in a position to speak with a strong voice. The importance of witnesses to Jesus is stressed in John 5:31 ff:

“If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid. There is Another who testifies about Me, and I know that the testimony He gives about Me is valid. You have sent [messengers] to John, and he has testified to the truth. I don’t receive man’s testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. John was a burning and shining lamp, and for a time you were willing to enjoy his light. But I have a greater testimony than John’s because of the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about Me that the Father has sent Me. The Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have not heard His voice at any time, and you haven’t seen His form” (John 5:31-37).

5:11- ETERNAL LIFE. *“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”* This comes as no surprise to anyone who has read what John says on the subject in the Gospel of John: “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, HCSB). There is little wonder that this verse has been called The Gospel in a Nutshell. To summarize what John is saying we may make four statements: (1) we have the witness of the Spirit (5:8); (2) God testified that Jesus Is His Son (5:9); (3) The believer has the inward witness of the Holy Spirit (5:10); and (4) Blessings are granted to the believers who receive and respond to the testimony (5:11-12).

5:12 - THE ONE WHO HAS. *“The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life.”* I grew up listening to Dr. R. G. Lee. I never agreed with W. A. Criswell more than when I heard him in Clarksdale, MS, at a state evangelism conference. Dr. Criswell said, “The best thing I can do for you is to stop and let you hear the prince of preachers, R. G. Lee. I remember that Dr. Lee asked us not to tape his sermon because he was going to publish it in a book. As I recall, the title of that sermon was WHEN WE BLEED WE BLESS, which was also the title of the book when it came out.

Dr. Lee often referred to the Bible as the “miracle book of unity in diversity, of simplicity in infinite complexity.” This verse explains why Dr. Lee would make such a statement. How could the truth be stated more simply than in this verse? Stated positively, “The one who has the Son has life.” Conversely, “The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life.” Not only does this verse state it with infinite simplicity, the Holman Christian Standard Bible states it in language any English speaking person can understand.

There was a time in America when this verse would have required little or no comment, just a nod of assent. Today, however, this truth must be stated unequivocally because it is a popular theory in America that Jesus is but one way to heaven. They tell us that we are all going to the same place, that there are many roads and they all lead to heaven. The Bible is very clear: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The name he had just mentioned was Jesus.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 5:6-13

INTRODUCTION. I tried to visit my parents once a week when they were experiencing serious health problems. When I could schedule it, I would stop by a health club in Greenville, MS, for a workout and a brief visit with friends there. On one of those stops when I walked into the health club I saw several friends and knew intuitively that this would be no ordinary workout. In fact, no one was working out. They were standing around a man I knew to be a professor at a nearby university. As a matter of fact, Jim had the professor backed up against a wall and he was letting him have it with both barrels. I was intrigued, but since it didn't concern me I made an effort to walk on by them and go to the dressing room. Just then, Jim looked over, and seeing me, he said, "Here is a preacher, let's ask him!"

Every preacher lives to hear those words! When the occasion arises, there is already more heat than light being thrown on the subject. The attitude is already combative, not conciliatory. They are not looking for answers, just determined to win the argument. My friend Jim was angry. The professor, who had expressed views that supported Communism over Capitalism, was amused. In fact, he was baiting the group, convinced that he had the answer for anything they might say.

It was during the Iran hostage crisis and the professor had made the statement that you could not blame the Muslims for what they were doing. During the debate someone had obviously mentioned Christ and the professor had made the statement that you couldn't blame the Muslims for not believing in Jesus Christ since no First Century historian ever mentioned his name, there is no way anyone could really know if He ever lived. Jim demanded that he ask me and he, with the same arrogant, defiant attitude that upset the men who were standing there, demanded of me, "Can you name any First Century historian who mentioned Christ?"

There were several things I might have said, including pointing out the fact that the Muslims do not doubt that Jesus had lived on earth. I might have pointed out the fact that one Jewish historian, Josephus, and two Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius did mention Christ. But I didn't do that either. For some reason I decided on a different approach. I simply said, "Yes."

"Name them!", he demanded.

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

"Those are not historians! They are Gospel writers. Can you name a historian?"

"Yes."

"Name Him."

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

We went through about three cycles of this before he decided to lecture me on the difference between a Gospel writer and a historian. I told him I understood what he was saying but there was no way I was going to concede the fact that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John set down an historical account of the life of Christ. For example, Luke's credentials has an

historian have been irrefutably established by modern scholars. I assured the professor that I understood what he was saying but I was not about to make that concession. I am convinced that, though the Gospels were not written specifically to give a history of an era, an area, or a movement, that which is recorded there is reliable - no, it is more than that. By the time a textbook on history, science, or social studies has been published it is already getting out of date and needs to be revised. The Gospels have never need a to be edited, updated, or revised .

John was the last Gospel writer and he wrote: "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). The evidence should prove to you that Jesus lived, but only the Holy Spirit can convince you that He is the Son of God and that He died on the Cross for your sins and arose the third day to give you eternal life. In our text today, the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of every word of Scripture, will illuminate your heart so that you will believe that Jesus is exactly Who the Bibles says He is.

I. JESUS IS THE ONE AND ONLY CHRIST, 1 John 5:6-8.

A. He Came By Water and Blood, 5:6.

This is an interesting way of certifying that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. There have been two basic interpretations of this. First, there are those who think this refers to the fact that when the Roman soldier plunged the sword into Jesus' side while He was on the cross, both blood and water flowed from the wound. To some this seems like the logical meaning.

Others believe that water refers to the inauguration of Jesus' ministry at the time of His baptism, and the blood refers to the cross. I believe the context supports the latter interpretation. Both the baptism of Jesus and the crucifixion of Jesus stress that Jesus came in the flesh. John has already written, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world" (1 John 4:2-3).

This refutes the claim that Jesus merely seemed to be human, or that the divine Christ left Jesus before His crucifixion, at which time he became human again (spirit could not die, they claimed, so he had to become human again). Both His baptism and His crucifixion declare Jesus to be the Christ, the Savior. At His baptism, the Son was baptized, the Spirit descended, and the Father declared Him to be His Son. Heretics claimed that the Spirit of Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism but departed before His death on the cross. His humanity was such that he might not have been divine at all, and his divinity was such that He might not have been human at all. Nothing like this can be said of any other.

B. The Spirit Bears Witness To Christ, 5:7.

The Spirit descended and rested upon Jesus at His baptism. Jesus taught His disciples that He would send His Spirit: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26). Jesus added, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of

Mine, and shall disclose it to you" John 16:13-14).

Right before His Ascension Jesus promised, "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not focused on the Third Person of the Trinity. He seeks to focus our attention on the Son, or if you prefer, on the Father through the Son. When we pray, we pray to the Father, through (or in the name of) the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

Beware of any doctrine that focuses primarily on the Holy Spirit. Some believers are preoccupied with "getting the Holy Ghost." Others seek to be "slain in the Spirit." Many do not understand the difference between being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which is once for all time at the point of salvation, and the filling with the Spirit which is progressive and continual. At the time of your salvation God placed the Holy Spirit in your heart to convict, convince, teach, guide, and empower you for worship, service, and outreach to others. We must humbly yield to the Holy Spirit daily in order for Him to fill our lives with His life. Only then are we equipped and empowered to live the spirit-filled life.

Here in our passage we are told that the Spirit bears witness to the Jesus. He certifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We may read in the Bible that Jesus is the Christ, or the Savior, but we will never embrace the significance of that statement until the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. When Peter made his great confession of faith, Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). We come to know Jesus as the Savior through divine revelation, not human perception or intuition. But how does that revelation work? That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of every word of Scripture, He has miraculously preserved it, and today He illuminates our hearts and minds so that we will understand it.

C. There Are Three That Bear Witness to Christ, 5:8.

John says, "For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." First, there is the Spirit. He was sent to glorify the Son. It was also John who recorded the words of Jesus on the subject (see John 16:8-14).

The second witness to Christ is water, or the baptism of Jesus, as we have seen. The baptism served as the inauguration to His public ministry. There were many people there who witnessed the baptism of Jesus. The story was often repeated throughout the land.

The third witness to Christ was the blood. That is, as we have seen, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross. "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood." When I was a young man I met an elderly pastor who had moved to a well known church in a small city. In his first three or four sermons he mentioned the fact that Jesus shed His blood for our sins. After one sermon the organist came directly to him and demanded that he stop preaching on the blood. In her opinion, the subject was too gory for a dignified congregation. He asked a deacon what he should do and the deacon said, "She is my sister-in-law, and I can tell you right now, there is nothing you can do about her. She has too much power in this church. The only thing you can do is to take the people who agree with you and pull out and start another church." That is exactly what they did, and the new church became greater than the first and had a reputation for many years as an evangelical church.

I heard a man say that a choir from his area went on a tour of churches on the west coast. Before they left, one church contacted them and asked for a list of songs they would sing in their church. The man who called told them that they did not want anything about the blood or anything else that might offend their people. Offended by the blood? I would have canceled the tour! The blood is a witness to Christ, and John does not hesitate to mention it.

II. WE HAVE THE WITNESS OF GOD TO HIS SON, 5:9-12.

A. The Witness of God Is Superior to the Witness of Man, 5:9.

1) Man's witness is expected but it is imperfect. John writes, "If we receive the witness of men" - and we have. This a conditional of the first class, assumed to be true. John is writing this epistle to believers, people who have received the witness of other people, and in turn they have witnessed to others. Jesus commanded His disciples to go throughout the world making disciples. We know that as the Great Commission. In His final address before His Ascension, Jesus announced that once the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would carry out His commission and become His witnesses throughout the world (Acts. 1:8).

Now let us be very serious about this - The Holy Spirit has come, and we are His witnesses.

There are many witnesses in the world. I was one of a number of people who went to a hearing with a very special lady who has been a care giver for many people for many for some fifty years. When we arrived the attorney was late, delayed by construction work on the highway. When he arrived he asked for time to meet with witnesses. Little did I realize I was going to be one of the two witnesses he would call.

I was sworn in and asked a few questions about the situation. I answered to the best of my ability, desiring to make one point that would correct a blatant lie someone had told on the witness stand earlier, but I was not given that opportunity. During the cross examination the attorney for the state fire marshal's office asked me if I recalled the name of a social service worker who had visited the home while I was there. I told him I did not remember her name, and when he just stood there, I added, "Of course, I forgot my wife's name one time." He asked, "Did you see an emblem on her car door." I said, "No - I just saw a dent in a fender."

Here were two human witnesses, one who was very passionate, but told two lies while he was on the witness stand - he was a false witness. Then there was my testimony - as honest and forthright as I could make it, but not as complete or as thorough as I would have desired. Neither testimony was perfect.

2) God's witness is essential and perfect. People who have been born again and received eternal life should be witnesses for Him, and all are to some extent. Some are very poor witnesses, others very effective. However, it is the witness of God that enables a lost person to come to the point that he sees himself as a condemned sinner whose only hope for salvation is God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Look at this verse again: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son."

B. The One Who Believes in the Son of God Has the Witness in Himself, 5:10.

Every single person who has received the Son of God has done so because of the witness of God the Father. No one is saved apart from God's self-revelation. That is what Jesus

meant when he told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed the truth to him, "but My Father who is in heaven." If the Holy Spirit is in you, you have the witness of the Father in you at all times. It was his witness that brought you to salvation and it is His presence that sustains you in a relationship with Him. Furthermore, it is His witness within your heart that affirms your relationship with Him.

As I have already said, this is very serious. He adds, "The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son." No one who rejects God's witness will be saved. Instead, he will spend eternity in hell, the place prepared for the devil and his demons, as well as all those who are deceived by him.

We live in an age of moral relativism and religious diversity. The world view of the Modernist was evolutionary humanism, often it was atheistic. The Post-modernist would reject the idea that there is no god, but enthusiastically embrace the idea of evolution and moral relativism, and above all, diversity. I have not seen the television program, Seventh Heaven, many times but when I have seen it I have witnessed how liberalism and New Age world views have impacted the church.

Post-modernists today parrot diversity and tolerance through the news media, education, and the entertainment media. Let me stress this as strongly as I possible can: there is but one way to know God, one way to find salvation in God, and one way to glorify or serve Him. That one way is through Jesus Christ, His Son. Please do not miss this point: All others are going to spend their eternity in hell. That is a real, fire and brimstone pit that burns with a fire no one can ever extinguish, where the individual will experience torment forever.

C. His Witness Is Specific, 5:11.

"And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." God loves us and gives us eternal life. That life comes through His Son, Jesus Christ. It does not come through Islam, Buddha, or any other false god. True believers understand this because of the witness of the Father through His Word and through His witness within the individual.

D. He Who Has the Son Has the Life, 5:12.

It is that simple - if you have Jesus you have eternal life. But, "he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." No modern theologian can change that. No modern philosopher can change that, and no amount of movies and television programs can override it. Any person who does not have the Son is dead. If he dies without the Son he will spend his eternity in hell. That applies to your friends and family members. God is bearing a witness to them, and he expects you to be witnessing to them.

CONCLUSION. John is very clear: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

C. Believers Have Assurance of Salvation, 5:13-17.

1. God wants you to have assurance of eternal life, 5:13.

5:13 - TO YOU WHO BELIEVE. *“I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”* No book in the Bible so powerfully returns to this theme over and over. God inspired the writing of this glorious epistle specifically to believers in order to assure them of eternal life. You are either saved by works (which position is refuted in Ephesians 2:9 and Galatians 2:16); by some combination of works and grace, (Refuted by Gal. 3:3 and Romans 11:6); or by grace, through faith (affirmed in Eph. 2:8; Gal. 2:16; Romans 5:1ff).

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 5:13

INTRODUCTION. Most of us who grew up in church memorized certain verses from the Bible. Many others memorized the Lord’s Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm. I participated in the Junior Memory Work Drill promoted by the Mississippi Baptist Training Union Department. We had a lot of verses to memorize, and fear of failure (I will admit it now) drove me to work hard and I moved through the local church drill, the associational drill, the district drill, then the state drill in Meridian. I was perfect all the way through, not so much because I was that smart, but as I said, I didn’t want to get up there and be embarrassed in front of all those people. Then I found out that if I had won the next year I would have gone to Ridgecrest for national competition. There was another motivation for memorizing those verses and that was that I loved the Bible. I had loved Bible stories before I was saved. Sunday School and Vacation Bible School were more important to me than baseball or boxing, and that is saying a lot.

Most of the verses I quote from memory today I memorized when I was participating in that memory drill or in the youth drill that followed. One verse stands out above all others. It is the verse I have quoted more than any other. It is John 3:16, and of course I learned it in the King James Version:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Other verses from John became important to me and while I do not recall whether or not I first memorized them during those memory work drills, I seem to remember that I did. There is John 10:28: “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Then, there is the verses I have often quoted in this series from First John. Those verses are John 20:30-31: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

I. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN PROCLAIMS SALVATION IN JESUS CHRIST, JOHN 3:16.

A. The First Three Gospels Proclaim Jesus Christ.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. That word means seeing alike. They give an account of the life of Jesus on earth. They tell us of the announcement of His miraculous birth, His virgin birth, his growth and development as an infant, child and youth. These three Gospels tell us about His baptism and the beginning of His ministry; they tell about the miracles and how the masses followed Him when he gave them bread, but turned and followed Him no more when He told them that He was the Bread of Life. There we have preserved an account of His teaching and preaching, as well as the great

miracles. In the Sermon on the Mount, we see the greatest standard of ethics the world has ever known. The Mosaic Law was superior to anything else the world had ever known, but the Sermon on the Mount moves us from Law to Grace in relationships.

B. The Gospel According to John is uniquely, The Evangelistic Gospel.

"These things I have written" refer to all John has written in this epistle, but I do not think we will do these words an injustice if we relate them to all John had been inspired to write up to this point.

We would do well to remind ourselves that it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, recorded by John the Evangelist as He was inspired by the Holy Spirit. When we read the Gospel according to John, we are keenly aware of the fact that everything in this really special account of the life and ministry of our Savior focuses our attention on God's provision for our salvation, and the way we may be saved.

If I had but a moment to put a portion of Scripture in the hands of a lost person, and knew that his eternal salvation, or punishment, depended upon the decision he made while he was reading that Scripture, I would not hesitate to hand him the Gospel According to John. If I only had an opportunity to give a lost person one verse, I would not hesitate to share with him John 3:16. I would love to follow that with other verses, but that one verse has rightly been declared "The Gospel in a Nutshell."

While I was at Mississippi College, I preached at the Hinds County Jail every Thursday afternoon, leading a group from the BSU at Mississippi College for two and one half years. During a part of that time I was preaching at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman at 8:00 A.M before going to the Dockery Baptist Church, between Ruleville and Cleveland where I served as a student pastor. During this time I had an opportunity to preach to several people at Parchman whom I had the privilege of leading to the Lord at the Hinds County Jail.

One Sunday morning I drove to Camp Four, got out of my car (and locked it!). When I entered the lobby an officer walked over to the large common room and announced, "Church!" Those who wanted to attend lined up and came through the door and then turned left and entered the mess hall. As each man walked through the door, he put his right hand over the right side of his mouth, turned his head slightly to the left, and counted, "One." All who followed counted, and when the last one came through the door he said, "one forty-one."

"Whoa! Go back and count again." This time they numbered 142 so I was told to go on to the mess hall and preach. At the close of the service they lined up and came by and spoke to me as they filed out and returned to the barracks. As one man approached me I could not miss the tattoo on his left arm: BORN TO GO TO HELL. How desperately I wanted to tell him that no one was born for the expressed purpose of going to hell. While I was trying to think what to say he came even with me and I was prepared to shake his hand and speak to him. Just before I reached out my hand, he gave his face a slight jerk to the right (away from me) and a split second later he gave his left shoulder the same little defiant jerk. He had heard God's message of salvation but very defiantly rejected it.

At the same camp, another day another man walked up to me and stopped the line to ask, "Were you in Jackson last May." I thought for a second and realized that I had been at MC. He then asked, "Did you visit the Hinds County Jail?" I assured him that I did, every Thursday.

A big smile broke out on his face as he held up a New Testament with a note in the front - in my hand writing! I had witnessed to him through a wire mesh in the outer door so he had never seen me. He said, "I didn't see you but I remember your voice. A few years later I preached in his brother's church and learned that this man who had murdered his wife - it was a cold-blooded, premeditated murder - was getting a ten day furlough each Christmas to spend with his brother. Both men are in heaven now, and I thank God I was able to share God's simple message of salvation with a man who was bound for hell.

C. God Wants All Whom He Saves to Share His Salvation with Others.

The Great Commission really is a commission, not a suggestion. Just before His Ascension, Jesus proclaimed that His followers would be empowered to be His witnesses just as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them. The Lord gave us the message and He gave us the command, but he did not give us one certain way of witnessing. D. Wade Armstrong was Director of Evangelism for the General Baptist Convention of California when I went door to door with him in Rayville, LA. He lived and breathed soul winning and I was amazed at how the Lord blessed his testimony when he shared God's "plan of salvation."

Dr. Leonard Sanderson was the Director of Evangelism for Louisiana Baptists when he preached a revival for me. When he arrived, I announced, "I have just taught your book on personal soul winning in preparation for this revival. He stumbled over the words for a few seconds before saying, "I no longer use that method of witnessing. The method I advocated in that book is too aggressive and it turns some people off." Everywhere we went he shared with people his own salvation experience and using Scripture, encouraged lost people to trust Jesus - just as he had.

Here is a simple but very effective arrangement of some key verses that may be used in sharing your faith:

1. YOU HAVE SINNED. (1) "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). (2). For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
2. YOU ARE LOST. (1) "The soul who sins shall die" (Eze. 18:20). (2) "He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).
3. GOD LOVE YOU. (1) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). (2) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).
4. GOD WILL SAVE YOU. (1) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). (2) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (! John 1:9).
5. HE WILL SAVE YOU NOW. (1) "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (Heb. 3:15). (2) "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).
6. HE PROMISES TO KEEP YOU. (1) "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 19:28). (2) "Kept by the

power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5).

7. HE OFFERS ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. (1) "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."

(2) "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3:36).

Not only will God save you, He will keep you, and He will provide assurance that you are His. The Holy Spirit, Who inspired John to write the verses we have seen from the Gospel According to John also inspired Him to write the fantastic little epistle that I like to call the Epistle of Assurance. The Gospel tells us how to be saved and this epistle tells how to know we are saved. God wants us to know Him and he wants us to know that we know Him.

II. FIRST JOHN WAS WRITTEN TO ASSURE US OF OUR SALVATION, 5:13.

A. "These Things" Were the Things John Has Written to Believers.

The Gospel of John was written to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Who came to provide for our salvation. This epistle was written to those who already believe in Jesus Christ. In case there seems to be a lot of repetition in this little epistle, let me assure you there is. Until the invention of the printing press, and until the Scripture was widely distributed, repetition helped people remember God's Word. For one who is in need of assurance of salvation, the repetition is not going to be a problem. But what specifically does John mean by "these things"? It could refer to all that precedes it, but I think it refers more specifically to the verses preceding this one (5:11-13).

"These things" were written to those "who believe in the name of the Son of God." It is interesting that different people refer to the message of salvation in different ways. I grew up hearing preachers talking about presenting the "plan of salvation." Little did I realize I would go off to a seminary and sit under a professor who had a problem with the term. And someone asked me if I was going to that cemetery! They were not trying to be funny, either.

B. These Things Were Written That You May Know That You Have Eternal Life.

There are many words we associate with the our salvation: faith, hope, and love you recognize from 1 Cor. 13. Of course, the greatest of these is love. However, the prominence of love in that brief list does not minimize faith or hope. Faith is essential to our salvation, and hope is essential to the joy of our salvation. I love it when someone finds an unforgettable way of expressing a great truth. Someone named Gilbert Beenken said of hope, "Other men see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope" [BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR].

Hope is not wishful thinking, it is something that is assured. The New Testament assures us that this hope justifies our faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord knew we would need this hope, and He provides it:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Paul wrote to his son-in-the-ministry, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12b). Don't you love that?

Hope in the New Testament is synonymous with assurance.

Jesus said, "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:28-30).

CONCLUSION. Our Lord wants lost people to know Him. He wants believers to know that they know Him. If you cannot say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day," I want to urge you to pause right now and ask Jesus Christ to forgive your sin and come into your life. The Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation, this is the accepted time."

2. The Christian's is given certain privilege in prayer, 5:14.

5:14 - THE CONFIDENCE. *"Now this is the confidence we have before Him: whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."* Even the most committed Christians need assurance of their salvation, assurance that the Lord hears their prayers, and that He responds to them. Seminars, Bible conferences, sermons, and books seek to encourage us to pray believing that God will answer us. Here, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pulls back the veil and reveals the source of the confidence we need. We have heard of circular reasoning, which is not to be desired. Here, we have circular experience, which is to be desired. Those who have confidence will go to the Lord in prayer, and those who ask and see that the Lord answers their prayers have the confidence to ask again

ACCORDING TO HIS WILL. This is the key. This is the secret! This is the mystery. It has often be said that nothing lies beyond the power of prayer but that which lies beyond the will of God. When we as believers go to the Lord in prayer we must remember that our purpose must not be to try to bend the will of God to suit our purpose, but to submit our will to His purpose. Look at the promises of our Lord:

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, **ask whatever you want and it will be done for you**" (John 15:7, emphasis added).

"Whatever you **ask in My name**, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *If you ask Me anything in My name*, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

To ask in Jesus' name means to ask in keeping with His nature and character. He will never violate His nature or character, but He will answer those who humble themselves before Him and ask, believing (assuming we ask in keeping with His name).

James was inspired to write:

“Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. An indecisive man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8).

We may conclude that the believer: (1) may approach God in prayer; (2) may approach God in confidence and faith; and (3) may approach God with his petitions.

3. The Christian receives assurances as his prayers are answered, 5:15.

5:15 - WE KNOW. *“And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.”* The logic is there. The question is, is the faith there. We have God’s word on it, but do we really believe it? There are some outstanding Christian television programs on today, but there have been, and are some that deceive and mislead people. In the seventies and eighties, there were a number of programs that violated basic New Testament principles. They dishonored the local church by urging people to send money to their ministries rather than giving their tithes through the local church. Some of these people accumulated considerable wealth before the “fall”, when one after another fell morally and ethically.

When I was a very young pastor, an elderly lady sent for me and when arrived at her home she told me she had just been diagnosed with cancer and she wanted me to pray for her. She went on to tell me she had sent a prayer cloth to certain popular televangelists who pronounced her “HEALED!” She refused to have the surgery that might have saved her life. If Oral Roberts or Rex Humbard said she was healed, then she was healed. A few months later, I was on vacation when I received a call. My younger brother Mike rode back with me to St. Francis Hospital in Monroe, LA. It was midnight when I got to her room. She had finally had to submit to the surgery, but it was too late.

When I was pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Nederland, Texas, I began having serious problems with my left foot. I found out later that I had a pinched nerve and that if a good doctor had made the proper diagnosis at the time it could have been easily corrected. However, two so-called specialists missed the diagnosis and almost totaled me out. One Sunday morning a lady told me she would like to call Katherine Kulhman and ask her to pray for me and I would get well. I told her I appreciated prayer, but if she had faith in the Lord I would have as much faith in her prayer as in those of a famous faith healer. I believe strongly in divine healing, but I have serious reservation about divine healers.

Here is God’s Word on the subject of prayer: “if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.” This does not say that some super-saint can pray and God will hear them, it says that we may pray believing, knowing He will hear us. The late Stephen Olford was one of the most amazing people I have ever met. He was the one preacher a generation of preachers said they had rather hear than any other preacher, probably because you were so aware that he “had been with Jesus.” When you talked with him or heard him preach you knew he had been

with Jesus. He and I stood in the same line to receive our doctorates in 1978. When I talked with him you sensed that he had been with Jesus. Dr. Olford taught us that “faith is not believing God can do it, faith is believing God will do it.” That which stands between you and answered prayer is such a simple thing. It is faith.

4. Intercessory prayer is encouraged, 5:16.

5:16 - HIS BROTHER. *“If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not bring death, he should ask, and God will give life to him. To those who commit sin that doesn’t bring death. There is sin that brings death. I am not saying he should pray about that.”* We are taught to pray for our brothers and sisters. That means that we must go beyond “putting them on our prayer list” at church. I may feel that I am absolved of my responsibility for my brother if I ask the pastor to “put him on our prayer list.” That usually means that my brother has had a heart attack or that he has been diagnosed with cancer, or he has been injured in an accident and I want someone else to pray for him. We are encouraged to pray for our brother when he is sick, but this verse says we are to pray for him when he is committing a sin. How many church members will admit that it is more fun gossiping about our brother when he is sinning than praying for him? Is it not tempting when “sharing our prayer requests” in Sunday School, to engage in a little gossip about our brother whose wife “just packed up and left” while he was on a camping trip with a group of young people from the church?

There are certain essentials in prayer for our brother or sister. First, we must have absolute faith in the Lord. Second, we must have a genuine love for our brother. Third, we must not be a participant in our brother’s sin (or in some other sin). Fourth, we must pray seeking the Lord’s will.

SIN THAT BRINGS DEATH. Obviously, most sins are not sins unto death, but John clearly teaches that there is a sin that is deadly enough to “bring death.”

This distinction is common in the rabbinic writings and in Num 18:22 the LXX has *labein hamartian thanatêphoron* "to incur a death-bearing sin" as many crimes then and now bear the death penalty. There is a distinction in Heb 10:26 between sinning willfully after full knowledge and sins of ignorance (Heb 5:2). Jesus spoke of the unpardonable sin (Mark 3:29; Mat 12:32; Luke 12:10), which was attributing to the devil the manifest work of the Holy Spirit. It is possible that John has this idea in mind when he applies it to those who reject Jesus Christ as God's Son and set themselves up as antichrists [ATR, Word Pictures in the NT].

5. All sin is serious, 5:17.

5:17 - ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. *“All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that does not bring death.”* The Bible is very clear on this subject: “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10). Paul adds in Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” He reveals the consequences of our sin: “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a). Sin is serious, but there is good news: “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23b). We are all sinners and we are either dead in sin, or we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Many people, including a lot of Christians, joke about sin. Where would humor be in Hollywood be without allusions, references, and references (crude or otherwise) about immorality? The late Jerry Clower proved that humor need not be off-color. Tom Lester, who played Eb on the sit-com, *Green Acres*, once said that he might never be on another show, but if he was you would not have to change channels because there were children in the room. I once met Jerry Clower and Tom Lester in the airport in Jackson, MS, and Jerry Clower said, "Me and Tom Lester just had a holy-roller revival all the way from Atlanta." Theirs was a wholesome humor.

We are all sinners and we can tell the lost sinner there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ. There are lost people who are so deep in sin that they are convinced that God cannot forgive them. I had the privilege of seeing Tommy, about whom I have written elsewhere; accept Christ as his Savior in the Hinds County Jail in Jackson, MS, after committing second degree murder. I had the joy of leading another man to the Lord after he had committed first degree murder. I had the opportunity to lead J. C. to the Lord after he had committed unspeakable criminal acts. I saw Tommy, J. C., and the other man later at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman and they were clinging to the Lord. They had a debt to society, but their sins had been forgiven.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 5:14-17

INTRODUCTION. As we have seen, the Gospel of John was written to persuade people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior; and to convince them to trust Him for their salvation. The First Epistle of John was written specifically to those who trust Jesus Christ for eternal life, that they might have assurance of their salvation. This is important! Otherwise, God would not have devoted so much of the New Testament to the subject. He wants lost people to come to know Jesus Christ, and He wants saved people to know that they know Him.

Doubt, fear, and anxiety are spiritually crippling. Doubt and faith are totally incompatible. God wants you to know Him and He wants you to know that know Him ("the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His (2 Tim. 2:19. See also Romans 8).

I. WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER, 5:14-15.

A. We have Confidence in Jesus Christ.

The words, "in Him" may be rendered "before Him" or "toward Him." The idea is of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, fellowship with him. When I was a child, or a teenager for that matter, I might have had a general idea of what my friends' parents would do under certain circumstances, but I knew intimately what my father would do. I knew I could trust him to do exactly what he said he would do. If I handed him some money and asked him to pick up a coke for me when he stopped by the store, I knew that when he gave me my coke he would give the exact change, down to the last penny. If I tried to wave him off and tell him to keep the change, he would say, "No, it's yours." The change was insignificant, but his character was not. He was consistent, scrupulously consistent. I also knew that if there was ever a threat to my life, he would lay his life on the line for me. He proved that when he pulled me out of the mill pond after I disobeyed him and waded beyond the line he set for me. I just wanted to know what they meant by a "drop-off." Now I know and I won't ever forget.

If there was ever any question about the Lord's Day, I knew what we would do. Many neighbors compromised, but not my father. A share cropper came to him one Saturday and said, "I know you go to church on Sunday and you don't work on Sunday, but I don't go to church. How about letting me take a tractor and plow out my cotton tomorrow?"

Daddy said, "I don't work on Sunday. My land is not worked on Sunday. And my tractor doesn't work on Sunday." He meant it. Later, when someone was cutting his soybeans, his combine broke down on Saturday. The man came by and told Daddy that he would get it repaired and finish Sunday. He lacked a few acres finishing. Daddy told him he would not have his beans cut on Sunday, and the man told him that if he left he could not return for that small amount. Daddy told him he would just have to leave it. The neighbor's hogs enjoyed the beans that were left. But Daddy was consistent.

I have even greater faith in Jesus Christ. My father had a series of heart attacks and in time he reached the point that he could not take care of himself, not to speak of caring for anyone else. When my brother and I picked him up at a hospital in Memphis once, James went in to bring him to the car and I waited and pulled the car around to the entrance. As I got out to help him into the car, he looked at me and smiled - and then tears began flowing down his cheek. One of the strongest men I have ever known was now one of the weakest.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Heb. 13:8). Furthermore, He promises to be with us always. You see, our relationship means something to Him! He will never let us down.

I have confidence when I pray to him - at least I should. But I am going to confess something to you.

I am ashamed every time I think of my mother's faith in Jesus and her confidence in prayer. I also confess that I may not have always shown her the proper respect when I talked with her about praying about something and she said, "Wait on the Lord." I was young and impatient, and when I did not see Him act when I thought He should, I would try to help him out a little.

I have seen the hand of God on my life. Following a severe heart attack, I spent two weeks in ICU waiting for them to decide what to do with me. After by-pass surgery I was released to go home and begin rehabilitation. Before too long, I rewrote my study in Philippians, UNDEFEATED: FINDING PEACE IN A WORLD FULL OF TROUBLE. I had the commentary published and gave the profits from the first printing to the church for the building fund. I remember saying that if I could trust the Lord to take care of me through all I had been through I would never fret over little things again. Now, here is my confession - I lied! I am ashamed of it, but I lied. Well, maybe I can call it something other than lying, but like Paul, what I wanted to do I did not do, and what I did not want to do I found myself doing it again. I am ashamed of it, but I still fret over the little things.

Considering my side of our relationship, Jesus would be totally justified if he never did anything for me. I do not deserve it. I am sorry, but I just keep on falling short of His glory, and His plan and purpose for my life. I have failed Him - but, HE HAS NEVER FAILED ME. And He never will. Such is the confidence in Him.

B. If We Ask Anything According to His Will, He Hears Us.

1) We must ask. Did you hear those words? Did you read them with me? All we have to do is ask. Wow! That says a lot. Furthermore, He says, "Trust Me." I have confidence in Him.

He will do what He says. We are told that we may ask for anything. Now, I have confidence in Jesus, but let me ask you some serious questions,

- a) Have you ever asked for something that you did not receive? Me too.
- b) Have you ever asked and things got worse? Me too.
- c) Have you ever prayed for something without confidence you would receive it? Me too.
- d) Does this make you happy? Me neither.
- e) Did you blame God? I did not, and do not - and hope you do not.
- f) Can you explain this? Possibly.
- g) Is there an answer? Absolutely. That answer is in the character, nature, and sovereignty of God.
- h) Can I prove that? I believe the Scripture proves it, and I have confidence in Him.

I never received everything I asked from my earthly father. I discovered in time that my earthly father gave me certain things and withheld certain things - or even delayed responding because he was more concerned about the development of my character than in meeting all my temporal desires.

2) We must ask that which is in accordance with His will. Wait a minute, are we saying that the sovereign God is going to do what He wants to anyway, and if we happen to request something He is already planning to do He will answer our prayer, but if it is not what He is planning to do it we can forget it? Well, yes - and no. There were many times in the Bible when God stated his purpose but when someone came to Him in prayer, he changed His plans. He announced that he would wipe out Israel in the wilderness and start over with Moses. Moses interceded and the Lord relented.

God sent Jonah tell the people of Ninevah that He was going to destroy that wicked city because of their wickedness. but when they repented He changed His mind. Obviously, His plans were conditioned on their response, or lack of a response.

There were times when God announced His plans and stated in no uncertain terms that He would not change His mind. He gave Israel, the Northern Ten Tribes, every opportunity to repent, warning them through Amos and Hosea repeatedly. Finally, He announced that He was sick of their music (wonder what He thinks about some we hear today?), nauseated by their sacrifices (which were intended to be a sweet aroma in the nostrils of God), and offended by their prayers. "Therefore," He said, "Prepare to meet thy God." They met him in the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis some time around 734 B.C. when Assyria defeated the combined forces of Israel and Syria. Then in 722 B.C. Sargon II invaded Israel and took away captives who were scattered among the nations. He then brought in foreigners and settled them in Israel. In time there was an amalgamation or intermarriage, which produced the Samaritans of Jesus' day. By the way, for those who see the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans as racial, they were all Semitic people. Their hatred was religious. A Hebrew scholar and former missionary to Israel told me that if you had dressed the Samaritan and the Jew alike and stood them side by side you could not have told them apart. But the main point is that the Lord reached the point that He said that it was too late for them to

call on Him.

In the Southern Kingdom, made up of Judah and Benjamin, Isaiah and Micah delivered the "Thus saith the word of the Lord," announcing that God would use Assyria to judge Judah if the people did not repent and follow Him. However, if they did not repent they would not be taken captive by Assyria. When Assyria had served His purpose he would break their power as one snaps a twig between his fingers. He would raise up Babylon and use them to judge Judah and take them into captivity in Babylon. They would be there seventy years, one year for each Sabbath Year they had refused to observe. The land would lie fallow for seventy years.

God used King Josiah to try to bring about a revival, but after he was killed by Pharaoh Necho on the Plains of Megiddo in 608 B.C., the revival ended and the people once again rejected the true God for idols. He spoke through Jeremiah, indicting the people for two sins: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). They had rejected God and they had chosen idols, but they would be purged of idolatry once and for all through the Captivity.

The Captivity might have been avoided if the people had just repented. Why didn't they? Do you supposed it was for the same reason that people kept calling America a Christian nation fifty years after it entered the Post-Christian era? That was in 1935, if we can believe Francis Shaeffer? Some rebelled and others drifted with them. But the offense was so serious that the Lord said to Jeremiah, "As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you" (Jer. 7:16). This was in the great Temple Sermon when he told them to stop trusting in the Temple for their security - the loved the Temple but despised the Lord of the Temple. There is more: "Then the LORD said to me, >Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!" (Jer. 15:1). Moses and Samuel were know as great intercessors.

I am confident that the Lord answers our prayers when we pray believing, and when we ask that which is in accordance with his will. There is one other thing we must bear in mind, and that is that the purpose in prayer is not to change God but to change us. If my purpose is to bend God's will to suit my purpose I cannot expect an answer from Him. If my purpose is to submit to Him in such a way that He can mold me into the person He wants me to be, then we can expect a response from Him.

II. WE MUST INTERCEDE FOR THOSE WHO SIN, 5:16-17.

A. If We See a Brother Commit a Sin We Must Pray for Him, 5:16.

1) There is a sin that leads to death.

It is possible for believers to sin to the point where physical death results as the judgment of God (1 Cor. 11:30). The believer who gets involved in certain sins may be in danger without realizing it, and we need to be very careful in announcing that the Lord has taken the life of another person because of some sin. God knows, and He is the Author of this Scripture. I would certainly pray that the Lord would take me home before allowing me to dishonor His holy name and His holy kingdom.

2) There is sin that does not lead to death.

There is a lot of speculation as to what is a sin unto death and what is not a sin unto death. That distinction was made in rabbinical teachings, but there is no common agreement today on what John has in mind. Perhaps these notes from the Believer's Study Bible will help:

"The enigmatic reference to "sin leading to death" has generated numerous explanations. One view argues that this phrase describes sin which results in physical death. Another interpretation suggests that "sin leading to death" refers to the actions of the false teachers -- individuals who had been exposed to the gospel and openly rejected it. While "sin leading to death" refers to the actions of these heretics, "sin not leading to death" describes sins committed by believers -- sins which do not indicate that forgiveness is no longer possible. Consequently, this verse distinguishes between prayer for believers and for unbelievers (cf. John 17:9). As the author discusses answered prayer (vv. 14-17), he explains the effectiveness of prayer offered for other believers (whose sin is "not leading to death"). However, he makes no such guarantee concerning intercession for non-Christians (whose sin is "leading to death") [BSB].

3) We must pray for those who lapse into sin.

We can leave the application of this verse to the Lord. We must pray for one another, especially when one is in sin. Pray for them as soon as you recognize a problem, which may be when they begin to miss worship service, Sunday School, or when we see a change in their attitude.

B. We Must Continue to Pray for One Another, 5:17.

1) All unrighteousness is sin.

All have sinned (past tense) and come short of the glory of God (present tense). John tells us that all unrighteousness is sin, and Paul assures us that means us. We all sin, so we need to repent. In 1 John 1:9, we are instructed: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We must confess our sins, and we must pray for others who lapse into sin.

2) There is sin not leading to death.

We do not have to understand all the implications of this verse to understand that sin is serious, and God will deal with it in a serious manner. If the lost person does not repent, He will spend his eternity in hell. America has watched news reports as wild fires have swept over more than 700,000 thousand acres of forests in California, destroying hundreds of homes, and killing at least twenty people. Flames ascending mountains preheat areas and make the fuel more combustible. Fire fighters say there is nothing man can do to stop these fires, they will burn until they consume the available fuel - trees, bushes, houses, cars, businesses - every thing in the path of these fires.

One word comes to mind when I watch on television as those flames, sometimes one hundred feet flames, roar through a community. That word is inferno. When I observe those flames I cannot help but wonder if people stop to think how much this fire can be used as a metaphor of hell. Hell will be so much greater, and those in hell will suffer conscious eternal torment - no death will relieve their suffering. An old friend, Harold Bryson, once

wrote a book which he titled, YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A HELL. Perhaps it is time to return to an emphasis on the certain reward of the lost person. We know for sure that his sins will lead to eternal death.

CONCLUSION. God deals with His children as a loving Father, but he does deal with sin. His holiness demands action against all unrighteousness. If we know Jesus as Savior, His blood has covered our sins, and we have been justified. After that, God will chastise us when we sin and do not repent, but He deals with us as a loving Father, not simply a judge. He is sovereign and he will deal with each person as He chooses. You may not have committed a sin that leads to physical death, but you and I commit sins for which we need to repent today.

6. Concluding exhortations, 1 John 5:18-21.

5:18 - WE KNOW. *“We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.”* Without fear of repetition, we are reminded once again that we can know God. The Gospel According to John was written that we might know Him (John 20:31). The First Epistle is written that we might know that we know Him (2:3).

John is addressing a pagan philosophy that was not an issue for the Palestinian church at the time of the Crucifixion or in the early days after Pentecost. When he was inspired to write the Gospel account that bears his name, a budding Gnosticism was finding its way into churches as pagan men and women were being saved and bringing some of their old beliefs with them into the church. Gnosticism, built on the Greek word “to know”, sought to show the initiated how to find God through secret knowledge or mysteries, and secret paths by which they might find God. In the Fourth Gospel, John places Gnosticism in a coffin and nails the lid shut on it. It would continue to deceive and entice large numbers of that day, and continue to deceive millions under the cloak of Eastern mysticism and New Age (post modern) religious beliefs today. The teachings are out there and they have vast support, but they have been eternally refuted.

No matter what the world thinks it knows, believers know divine truth. Evolutionists tell us they have science and we only have faith. Their science is continuing, as one evolutionary scientist after another shoots down the latest theory. It is a theory, not fact, yet they call it science when they have never proved it. The alternative is to more than they can handle and they well know it.

DOES NOT SIN. Specifically, in this verse we are told her that we can know something specific about our relationship with God: *“We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.”* As we have seen at the beginning of this study, John was inspired to write that anyone who says that he never commits acts of sin is a liar. The idea is continuous sinning. At the same time, we are told that the true believer does not continue in sin so as to make it his lifestyle. Literally then, this says that we know that one who is born of God, one who is born again, does not keep on sinning.

THE EVIL ONE. Here, the word is masculine and personal as in 1John 2:13, and not neuter. Therefore, the one identified must be Satan (as in Matt. 6:13), rather than an evil person.

DOES NOT TOUCH HIM. The construction means “to lay hold of or to grasp rather than a mere superficial touch (*thigganô*, both in Col 2:21). Here the idea is to touch to harm. The devil cannot snatch such a man from Christ (John 6:38) [ATR, Word Pictures in the NT].

5:19 - UNDER THE SWAY. “*We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one.*” Some hold that this means the Greco-Roman world of John’s day, but I am convinced that it means the world, with its political, social, and commercial systems of any age. This is the world that is at enmity with God. This is the world that is evil and corrupt (Rom. 1), the world that would extinguish the Light of the World (John 1).

The world hates Jesus Christ and it hates those who belong to Him. If you are the friend of the world you are the enemy of Christ. Here we find the reason for that: The world is under the sway of Satan.

5:20 - THE SON OF GOD. “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true One. We are in the true One that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*” The word “know” appears 35 times in the First Epistle of John, beginning John 2:3: “**This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him:** by keeping His commands.” This is affirmed in 2:5: “But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is **how we know we are in Him.**” John resorts to repetition to assure the believer and to give tests by which he can know that he knows Jesus Christ as his Savior.

It has become popular to promote inclusion over exclusivity; diversity over the narrow way of salvation revealed in the New Testament; and tolerance over the straight and narrow. Jesus is the only name known among men whereby one must be saved (Acts 4:12). He is the “true One”, the Son of God.

5:21 - GUARD YOURSELVES. “*Little children, guard yourselves from idols.*” There is a final exhortation - we must avoid idols. The Scripture is very clear as to God’s commandments about Idolatry, as we see in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere. Israel was commanded, “Do not make idols for yourselves, set up a carved image or sacred pillar for yourselves, or place a sculpted stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God” (Lev 26:1).

There is a powerful passage in Jeremiah in which the Lord told Jeremiah to confront the people of Judah with their sin of idolatry:

“**Has a nation ever exchanged its gods?** (but they were not gods!) Yet My people have exchanged their Glory for useless idols. Be horrified at this, heavens; be shocked and utterly appalled. This is the Lord’s declaration. For My people have committed a double evil: **They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water**” (Jer 2:11-13, HCSB, emphasis added).

In 1 Cor. 10:14, Paul admonishes us to flee from idolatry. In his letter to the Colossians, he helps define idolatry for us today: “Therefore, **put to death whatever in you is worldly**: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, **which is idolatry**” (Col 3:5, emphasis added). Idolatry reaches beyond bowing before idols to include anything that you place between yourself and the Lord. If you put the things of the world ahead of God it is idolatry. Idolatry may include some very wholesome things, such as golf, tennis, hunting, fishing, shopping, house work, gardening, or labor. If you put it between yourself and the Lord you are rejecting the fountains of living water and digging for yourself broken cisterns that can hold no water. A lot of work is required to hew our a cistern from solid rock and often times a lot effort goes into spiritual cisterns that are cracked and can hold no water.

“Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns; broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:11-13).

What were the two sins they had committed?

- 1) They had forsaken Yahweh, “the fountain of living waters. They did slip up, they rejected Him. Their sin was not ignorance but iniquity.
- 2) They had “hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” That is idolatry! They had chosen to forsake the Lord and they has chosen to adopt false gods who were meaningless and powerless - gods “which are not gods.”

America is in the process of rejecting the “fountain of living waters” today as people embrace abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality - and now same sex marriage. Those who advocate same sex marriage applaud the decision by the Massachusetts supreme court to declare same sec unions legal. They have redefined marriage! But their definition is not found in the Bible. Their relationships are condemned by God, but they continue to reject the fountain of living waters in favor of that which leads to destruction and misery. America has been carrying on an idolatrous relationship with pleasure and immorality for decades and it is getting worse. We had better heed the warning with which John concludes this book.

“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.” What a way to conclude a book. But why not? This little epistle, inspired by the Holy Spirit and set down by the one surviving apostle, has given us all the information we need to live in confidence before the Lord. It spells out the character of the citizen of the Kingdom of God - we practice righteousness, not sin. It offers assurance of salvation - we may know that we know Him. It offers confidence in prayer. It warns us against sin. It concludes with a warning against idolatry, and this warning will apply to the actual practice of bowing before idols, or the sin of putting anything in the place of Jesus Christ in your life - of substituting anything for Him or letting anything get between you and the Savior.

We must trust in the Lord and we must be forever vigilant - “guard yourself from idols.” Guard yourself against anything that will hinder your growth in the Lord or your fellowship with Him.

The Sermon Notebook - 1 John 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION. This is the final message in a series from the First Epistle of John, an epistle of hope, joy, assurance, wisdom, and righteousness. The Gospel of John was written to convince people that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and to persuade them to trust Him for their salvation. The First Epistle of John was written to Christians - “that we might know that we know Him.” The Lord loves you enough that He gave His only begotten Son to die on a cruel cross for our salvation. He wants you to know Him and He wants you to know that you know Him. Doubt is spiritually crippling, it robs us of spiritual vitality, spiritual vision, and the power the Holy Spirit seeks to release in our lives. With faith there is assurance, hope, and rest in the Lord. To refuse His assurance is sin, and when we are guilty of sin we must confess it to Him and repent.

Instead of saying, “Lord, prove yourself to me”, we should say “Lord, forgive me for not seeing the proof you have made abundantly clear to all who will receive it. This little epistle is a great place to start. John has written, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13).

I. GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU KNOW HIM, 2:3.

A. First John Is an Epistle of Hope and Assurance.

Let me review with you some of the verses from 1 John that tell us we can be sure of our salvation. You know you are saved when:

- 1) You walk in the light, 1:6.
- 2) You have fellowship with God’s children, John 1:7
- 3) You have a keen sense of your own sinfulness, 1:8.
- 4) You live in willful obedience to God’s Word, 2:3.
- 5) You are no longer are enamored with the world, 2:15.
- 6) You eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord, 3:1.
- 7) Hope of His return leads one to purify himself, 3:3.
- 8) You have a growing freedom from sinful behavior, 3:6.
- 9) You have a genuine love for other believers, 3:14.
- 10) You demonstrate your love in word and deed, 3:18.

B. This Assurance Is Given Only to Born-Again Believers.

God forbid that we should ever try to convince any lost person that he or she is a Christian. The devil may try to convince him, but God will not, and neither should we. This assurance is given to believers because a loving Father wants his children to know they belong to Him and that He loves them.

II. NO ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD CONTINUES IN SIN, 5:18-20.

A. You Have Been Justified By Faith.

In the doctrinal section of Romans, Paul was inspired to write the definitive work on three great doctrines: The Doctrine of Sin, the Doctrine of Justification, and the Doctrine of Sanctification. He has a lengthy discussion of Justification in Romans 3:21-5:21. Justification is a metaphor of the courtroom, as the judge raps the gavel and declares the accused person, "Not guilty." We have received a judicial pardon for our sins. That does not mean that we have never sinned - it does not even mean that we will not sin in the future. It means that we have come under the blood of the Lamb of God, the blood shed by our eternal High Priest, Who offered Himself - the perfect, once for all sacrifice for our sins. He took our sins upon Himself and when we believe in Him we receive a judicial pardon. After that when we sin He will deal with us as our Heavenly Father, not simply as a judge. Sin is serious and His discipline will be serious, but we are still His children.

B. You Are Being Sanctified By Faith.

Paul, in the same doctrinal section of Romans, was inspired to set down the doctrine of Sanctification (Romans 6:1-8:39). If I were asked to put what Paul says about Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification, I would simply say that:

- 1) In Justification we are delivered from the guilt of sin.
- 2) In Sanctification we are being delivered from the power of sin.
- 3) In Glorification we will be delivered from the presence of sin.

Justification is once for all, as the original language demands in Romans 5:1. Sanctification begins at the moment of salvation and continues until we are glorified - at least, it should! But wait a minute, does not sanctification mean that we have to speak in tongues, be slain in the spirit, fall out onto the floor, jump pews? Do you not have to "pray through" to receive the Holy Spirit?

Let me give you a brief scriptural view of Sanctification. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). In Romans 8:29-30, he wrote, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." Every person who is justified is predestined to be glorified! He is not going to lose anyone He saves. But our concern right now is what happens between Justification and Glorification. That is the time when the Holy Spirit is seeking to conform us to the image of God's Son.

When you begin to think like Jesus ("Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus"), you will begin to act like the Lord Jesus. Sanctification is, in Paul's words, being conformed

to the image of Jesus Christ. That is what the Holy Spirit seeks to do with every one of us. He indwells us for that specific purpose. To give it any other definition falls far short of the sanctification revealed in the Bible - and what a cost we pay if we do that! Peter offers more insight: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18a). That is sanctification in progress - growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Paul demonstrated his sanctification when he penned those unforgettable word in his epistle to the Philippians, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21).

C. No One Who Is Born of God Sins (v. 18).

Now that takes some study. Has not Paul written that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23)? He did, indeed. We have sinned (past tense) and we come short of the glory of God (present tense). Then is there a contradiction here. Absolutely not! Let me remind you of what John has written in this epistle.

1) In 1:8, John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." If we say we have no sin at all we are deceiving ourselves.

2) In 1:10, he wrote, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." If we say that we have not sinned at all we make God a liar.

3) In 2:1, he wrote, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is His desire that we do not commit any acts of sin, but when we do (and we will), He is our Advocate with the Father.

What do we do when we sin? He has the answer for that: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9).

4) In 3:6-9, John wrote, "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Now let us summarize what he has said. We commit acts of sin. All of us fall short of the glory of God, and that is sin. We must confess that sin and when we do He will forgive us of that sin and "cleanse us of all unrighteousness" (1:9). Is there not a contradiction in 3:6-9? Absolutely not!

If we say we commit no acts of sin we are deceiving ourselves. However, the born again child of God cannot continue in sin so as to make it his lifestyle. In the NASB we see the emphasis is on what one practices - his on going practice (the one who practices righteousness is righteous); whereas the one who continues in sins does not know God (the one who practices sin is of the devil). The construction in the original makes this clear - the child of God cannot continue in sins, or keep on sinning. Continuing in sin is proof that one does not know Jesus Christ.

What does that say about a lot of church members who continue in sin for years? It says that we had better pray for them and share the Word of God with them, because there is a

strong possibility that they have never been born again.

D. John Tells Us What We Can Know for Sure, 18-20.

- 1) John says, "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him." The one who makes sin a lifestyle does not know Jesus Christ. Salvation is manifested in a changed life.
- 2) "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (v. 19)

The children of God can draw a clear distinction between the kingdom of God and the world that under the power of the devil. Where does that leave all those people who do not believe there is a devil? They obviously cannot make this distinction, can they? If Jesus recognized him and if the Holy Spirit inspired Paul and John to warn us we had better take him seriously.

- 3) "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (v. 20).

We know Jesus has come. We know that He is true (He is the truth, John 14:6). We also know that we are in Him who is true (or else we could know that He is true). Jesus is the "true God and eternal life." He is life and to know Him is eternal life.

ILLUSTRATION. I had seen the young couple a few times before but I had never met them. Then I found myself talking with them. He was a large man and she was a rather small young lady. She was doing most of the talking and he was looking at her and nodding, reaffirming his support for what she wanted to do. She wanted to get established in a new area but she did not want to trade on her mother's name. She didn't even want to tell me her mother's name - but when she did I did not recognize it. They are both artists.

When I had an opening, I asked them if they were Christians - they were hard to figure. Their response would have made a documentary for New Age religions. "Well, we are not a part of organized religion. We are just spiritual. Like, we don't worship with groups, we just kind of get in touch with someone up there, you know the Creator. We are spiritual." She said, "I am Jewish," He added, "My parents are Gospel singers and they have toured for years. They took me with them when I was young and now they own a horse ranch in Texas and still sing Gospel music.

The young wife said, "They forced it on him." To which, he said, "Yeah, it was forced on me. We don't like public worship. We just like to get by ourselves and try to get our spirits in touch with ..." I never did understand what it was with which he was trying to get into touch. But when he mentioned the Creator I asked him, "Do you know Who that is?" He seemed puzzled, so I asked, "Do you know who takes credit for creation?"

He remembered and said so. The wife had said she was Jewish and I said, "Jesus was Jewish, and so were Paul and John." I talked with her about the relationship between Christians and Jews, expressing my appreciation for the contribution Jewish people have made to me. Then we talked for a few minutes about the Jews for Yeshua organization. I had visited with some of their members in a WalMart parking lot and I have received a lot of their materials over the years.

The husband told me he did not like to go to church and listen to some preacher tell people

what they ought to do. They understood when I said that God did not call me to traumatize people, entertain them, or psychoanalyze them; He called me to feed them. They were receptive, so I said, "By the way, since you are Jewish I am sure you are familiar with the three basic names for God in the Hebrew? They listened and I was able to share a brief Bible lesson which I am praying the Lord will use to motivate them to go to the Bible. I also pray for another opportunity to witness to them, but I am sure that they are never going to be persuaded by a brief conversation.

As I left I could not help being amazed that this young couple thought of their position and their reasons for adopting this position as a virtue. They did not see the colossal ego behind one's inventing a god or a religion for himself. "Professing themselves to wives, they have become as fools."

I don't know how people get like that, but I do know that our culture has changed and is changing more all the time. Unless we reach the children and younger youth, it is going to be hard to reach them as they grow older. This has always been a problem because of pride and other factors - but let me stress right now that we are living in a different world and we had better be prepared to invest time, prayer, and serious Bible study in our effort to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

D. We Are Saved, Sure, and Secure.

Our emphasis throughout this series of messages from First John has been on assurance of salvation. The Gospel of John was written that we might know Him, and the First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know him. One doctrine I have not stressed is Security of Believers (Perseverance of Saints). It has been in my mind all the time, but I am convinced that the same verses that stress assurance of salvation affirm Security of Believers. Briefly, let me point out a few key verses that teach the Justification is a once for all experience.

"And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:28-30).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

"For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12b).

The construction in the original in some passages stress that for those of who are saved, our justification was completed action in the past from which we receive continual, eternal benefits. If you are saved, God wants you to be sure and He wants you know you are secure in Him. You are secure, not because of you are able to hold onto God but because He is able to hold onto you.

CONCLUSION: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Jeremiah painted a word picture of America as he described ancient Judah:

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION, 1-3

“To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth and not only I, but also all who have come to know the truth because of the truth that remains in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

AUTHOR. This writer is fully aware of the fact that both the term “elder” was applied both to an elderly person and to those of rank or position in a body such as the Sanhedrin, and then in the church. For this study it is assumed that the author was the Apostle John, the Beloved Disciple, who refers to himself here as “the elder”, no doubt because he was now an elderly man, having outlived all the other apostles and Paul. Paul had begun the work at Ephesus and served there for three years. John had now served in Ephesus for many years. Paul was martyred around A. D. 68 and John probably recorded the Revelation around A. D. 96 - 98. John probably served as mentor to some of the men who would become the leaders of the Christian movement over the next fifty years. He would influence those who would lead the church over the next century or more.

DATE: A. D. 86-90. The circumstances and subjects suggest that this epistle was written around the same time as the First Epistle of John. It was probably written from the same place, Ephesus.

RECIPIENT. The Second Epistle of John is addressed to “The Elect Lady.” There is a debate as to the identity of the “elect lady”, some holding to the theory that the term probably referred to a particular church. Others have suggested that the epistle was sent to a particular Christian home where John had found lodging on some of his preaching missions.

“Some believe that the ‘chosen lady’ is a figurative way of designating a particular church (‘chosen sister,’ v. 13, would then mean a different church). Others hold that the letter was addressed to an individual Christian and her family (in which case the “sister” would be her natural sister)” [RSB Notes].

The author addresses his audience as “the elect lady and her children.” If the “elect lady” is a person, then we understand that her children would be her real children. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes offer the following help:

As he communicates his love for these believers, he states that he loves “in truth.” The word “truth” (aletheia, Gk.) appears five times in this brief epistle. Thus, the author’s love is consistent with the truth of the Christian message which he and his readers have received. This emphasis on truth shows that authentic Christian love in-

volves more than emotional sentimentality. The Christian community consists of those who “know the truth” [BSB Notes].

Because of the feminine form John uses for this lady, it will be assumed here that John is writing to an individual, and not just any individual. She was a person of deep character, purity, and ideals. The basis for the friendship between John and this family) was the truth. They shared a common conviction about the Gospel. John had given his life to the preaching of the Gospel and they had given their lives to living it.

GREETINGS: Verse 3.

GRACE - Unmerited love and favor.

MERCY - Compassion and concern that leads to action.

PEACE - Inner security and tranquility.

Robertson quotes David Smith: “The salutation is like that in the Pastoral Epistles: “*Charis*, the wellspring in the heart of God; *eleos*, its outpourings; *eirênê*, its blessed effect” [ATR]. Compare the greeting here with those in the Pauline Epistles. Some have claimed that Paul invented the Christian epistle, combining the Greek greeting (Grace) and the Hebrew greeting (Peace). Mercy, in the Christian experience, is closely related to grace, but distinct from it. In mercy, we do not receive the penalty we deserve for our sins; in grace we receive blessings we could never merit. Peace is proactive, not passive. To the world, peace means if you don’t hurt me I won’t hurt you. To the Christians, peace seeks the highest good for others, regardless of how they are treating us.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, 2 John 4-5.

1. There is reason to rejoice when our children walk in the light, 4.

1:4 - YOUR CHILDREN. “*I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, in keeping with a command we have received from the Father.* Some believe these were grown children who were out on their own and were living the kind of life the Lord would have them to live. John rejoiced in that fact. What an occasion to rejoice in our day!

David Hammett is a highly respected attorney to most people who know him, but to me, just to mention takes me back the little boy in the fifth grade my family welcomed into our hearts, along with his family, when I became his pastor. I assumed that David was a born-again Christian because he had made a profession of faith, been baptized, and was active in every aspect of our church work. However, when his mother Sylvia called and asked me to talk with David, I realized that the Lord was dealing with him. It seemed that he was looking for assurance of salvation, but after he went back home he became convinced that he should pray to receive Jesus Christ. He was saved and when his mother called, we drove to their home and David shared his experience with me. After he had finished law school and was established in a Monroe, LA law firm, where my brother Mike is a partner, he packed for a Florida vacation. Looking for something to read, he picked up a copy of my

Commentary on Philippians, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*. He decided to packed it. He told me that he and his wife were praying for an opportunity to witness to one of her cousins, but didn't know how they would open the subject of his need for a relationship with the Lord.

One morning, he was reading my book and suddenly a response to something he was reading caused enough of a reaction to prompt his wife's cousin to ask what he was reading. He showed him the book and said, "Let me read something to you." He read about the experience of a thirteen year old boy, and when he finished he said, "That thirteen year old boy? That was me! I was that thirteen year old boy."

When David told me about that later in the summer, I experienced the same kind of joy of which John writes here. When I build my son John a Captain's Bed, the first plan I drew called for either a fold out or slide out second bed for David when he slept over. There is little wonder that I would rejoice in his relationship with the Lord. I could mention many others, including several who are related to David. His first cousin Robin's husband (James Remedies) has spoken for me on a number of occasions.

2. We are commanded to love one another, vs. 5.

1:5 - I URGE YOU. *"So now I urge you, lady Cnot as if I were writing you a new command, but one we have had from the beginning Cthat we love one another."* This continues the theme of 1 John. We must love one another. In fact, love for one another is one of the ways we know that we know the Lord. Compare to the following verses from the First Epistle of John:

"Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old command that you have had from the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard" (1 John 2:7).

"Now this is His command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us" (1 John 3:23).

"And we have this command from Him: the one who loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21).

NOT...A NEW COMMAND. That this is not a new commandment is abundantly clear in the First Epistle of John. The point here is that for the time of there salvation they had known that they were to love one another. They might not have had Sunday School classes but they had a lot of opportunities to study sound doctrines. These people know what God expects of them.

3. There is a reciprocal relationship between love and obedience, 1:6.

1:6 - THE COMMANDMENT. *"And this is love: that we walk according to His commands. This is the command as you have heard it from the beginning: you must walk in love."* Christian love

is not a warm fuzzy feeling, even though obedience to the commandment may well bring one a warm fuzzy feeling. What the Scripture does here is not define love, but shows the expression of it, the proof of it. We know we are loving God and others when we obey God's command to love Him and to love others. Obedient Christians do not just talk the talk, they walk the walk.

Look at the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments deal specifically with our responsibilities to God. The last six commandments deal with our responsibilities to one another. For that reason, Jesus could sum them up in the Two Great Commandments.

WALK IN LOVE. Of all the commandments that govern our relationship with one another, this is basic. It is important that we note that we are commanded to "walk in love", not simply walk by it and admire it from time to time, as when someone produces a documentary on the generosity or compassion of some famous individual. "Walk" in the Bible denotes continuous action. We must keep on walking in love. This is a love that can be commanded, but emotions cannot be commanded. It is a mental attitude kind of love. It can be directed by the mind - and often enjoyed with the heart.

II. WARNING OF DANGERS, 1:7-11.

1. John warns about "deceivers", 1:7.

1:7 - MANY DECEIVERS. *"Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."* Originally the word "deceivers" referred to people who wandered about with the purpose of deceiving, seducing, or leading astray. Some have called them "religious tramps." The Docetic Gnostics were antichrists, denying the incarnation of Jesus Christ. There are many deceivers who use philosophy, psychology, geology, or astrophysics to deny Him in our day, but these Gnostics focused on the humanity of Christ. They believed that all matter is evil and that only that which is spirit is good. To dovetail Christianity with their gnostic beliefs, some people came up with a compromise theory. Some taught that Jesus just seemed to have a body. Others taught that He was born with a flesh and blood body, but became spirit at His baptism. Then, before He went to the cross He once again took on a physical body. They were antichrists.

Television was made to order for charlatans, and some charlatans have used it. There are many outstanding people who use television to get out the Word, but there have been some deceivers. I am going to go out on a limb and make a statement without research to collaborate my theory. Here it is: if you are a deceiver looking for sheep to fleece, proclaim yourself to be a faith healer. There. I said it.

God, being absolutely sovereign, can call anyone to do anything He chooses. He can bless any believer with whatever gift He chooses. At the same time, the commands and gifts that least lend themselves to deception are witnessing or evangelizing, discipling, ministering, and loving one another. The deceiver and the antichrist seek the sensational and the novel. I would never be guilty of being a deceiver, so I can just skip that one and go on to the next verse, right?

Sadly, some of the most influential deceivers are found in some of the sciences. Carl Zimmer, writing for *Popular Mechanics Magazine* (Sept, 2006), stated that:

On July 3, 2005, the Deep Impact spacecraft released an 820-pound probe into the path of comet Temple 1, which was traveling at 23,000 mph. Upon collision, the probe blasted a crater into the comet's surface, sending a stream of debris flying through space. Deep Impact' cameras snapped pictures of the carefully choreographed event, and scientists have been carefully pouring over the images ever since. They hope to find in the cosmic crash some clue about how life was formed on Earth...

There is one common thread to life on Earth that scientists know for certain: All life here is composed of the same basic building blocks. All proteins are made of compounds known as amino acids. All genes are made of molecules known as nucleotides, which.....

[Carl Zimmer, *Popular Mechanics*, Sept., 2005, pp. 72- 73]

Who knows how many faithful readers will read that article and feel particularly enlightened. Some will totally believe everything they read in a science text, or journal. Others feel compelled to portray themselves as scientific, yet religious, so they come up with a compromise. When they do, they have been deceived.

Is it wrong for scientists to probe, explore, research, or search for answers? Absolutely not. God commanded man not only to multiply and replenish the earth, but also to subdue it. However, if man begins a quest for secrets specifically to prove we do not need God, or that God did not create the world, that is sin of a blatant nature. It is a sin which says, we know what you said about how You created the world and how you created life, but we reject it because we are too smart to buy your explanation. A careful study of Jeremiah will underscore God's response to those who refuse to listen to Him.

Thankfully, there are many scientists who believe God created the world and all that is in it just as He said he did in Genesis. As I have noted in other studies, I spent about an hour getting acquainted with Ken Ham before he spoke to the Louisiana Baptist Pastors Conference in Lafayette a number of years ago. I recognized him from his picture in publications from the Institute for Creation Research (He later created *Answers in Genesis in America* after creating a similar organization in Australia). Since I was the only one who recognized him I had him to my self for an hour. After he spoke, I could not get close enough to him to return material he had asked me to hold for him. I finally got help in passing it to him.

The late Dr. Jan Mercer guided my study of Creation for a quarter of a century. Dr. Jimmy Draper, when he was President of LifeWay Christian Research, personally told me that when he was her pastor, if he preached on creation, he took his sermon to Jan for her to check his facts to be sure he had it right. That says a lot about both of them.

While scientists search for “the common thread to life on Earth”, anyone can read the only eyewitness account there will ever be in Genesis. As Ken Ham has often asked, “Were you there?” God was the only One who was there, and according to His account, God said, “Let there be” and there was. Then He who created all those building blocks and designed all those “threads”, pronounced it, “Good.” That, of course, is only His opinion, right. Am I naive enough to believe that? You bet I am! Francis Schaeffer said that the most meaningless word in the English language is the word God spelled with a small “g”. I spell my God with a capital “G”.

Evolutionists are deceivers, but they are not the only ones. Some of them come to church. I visited with a retired missionary who had spent most of his adult life in Brazil, teaching in a Christian seminary. I asked, “Dr. Bell, you have been back in the states for several months now. What is your impression of your denomination and your state office now that you have returned from the mission field?” He thought for only a couple of seconds before answering with a heavy heart, “Games and gimmicks.” God forbid that we participate in those games and gimmicks. Sadly, I have witnessed them in local churches, and in denominational meetings. That is not of God - it is antichrist.

A church ordains a homosexual. Another church elects a homosexual priest as Bishop. Cities withdraw privileges from the Boy Scouts because they will not allow homosexual Scout leaders. A pastor of priest joins the boys in a weekly poker game. They serve beer and he participates. They joke about it. Other deceivers teach false doctrine, telling us that God’s grace is not sufficient - it is only sufficient, they say, if I do my part (baptism, communion, and works).

2. The elect lady must be on her guard continuously, 1:8.

1:8 - WATCH YOURSELF. *“Watch yourselves so that you don’t lose what we have worked for, but you may receive a full reward.”* If you mention the word “watch” to the average reader of the Bible, he will probably think of the words of our Lord, “Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—except the Father. Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming” (Mark 13:32-33). In this verse, however, the warning is we do not lose our reward. Paul expands this idea:

“If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one’s work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one’s work. If anyone’s work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire” (1 Cor 3:12-15).

3. There are tests for divinely appointed teachers and leaders, 1:9.

1:9 - ONE WHO REMAINS. *“Anyone who does not remain in the teaching about Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son.”* Robertson offers the commentary:

“Not the teaching about Christ, but that of Christ which is the standard of Christian teaching as the walk of Christ is the standard for the Christian's walk (1Jn 2:6). See John 7:16; John 18:19.

“These Gnostics claimed to be the progressives, the advanced thinkers, and were anxious to relegate Christ to the past in their onward march. This struggle goes on always among those who approach the study of Christ. Is he a "landmark" merely or is he our goal and pattern? Progress we all desire, but progress toward Christ, not away from him. Reactionary obscurantists wish no progress toward Christ, but desire to stop and camp where they are. "True progress includes the past" (Westcott). Jesus Christ is still ahead of us all calling us to come on to him” [Word Pictures in the NT].

Two things may be seen in the instruction to the “elect lady” here. First, to remain implies to remain within the boundaries of the teaching of Christ. Second, to remain means to continue in a relationship or service. One may begin in the truth, but veer off on a tangent at some point and teach false doctrine. We must guard against that.

Today, more and more churches refuse to take a stand against drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling, Sunday work or recreation, and moral issues, including opening the doors to practicing homosexuals. Those who do those things have not remained in the teachings of Christ.

4. There is a course to take in dealing with false teachers, 10-11.

1:10 - DO NOT RECEIVE HIM. *“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and don't say, >Welcome, ' to him.”* It seems that there were times when a stranger would come to a church and claim that he was being led of the Lord to speak to that church. We still need to be on guard against those who show up with extra-biblical revelations today. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, and others actively seek to convert members of Christians churches today. We must not receive them and we must protect our children from them.

1:11 - THE ONE WHO SAYS. *“For the one who says, “Welcome,” to him shares in his evil works.”* If you set up a program and invite someone to come into your church or your home and teach any false doctrine you share in his guilt.

I grew up in the Mississippi Delta, seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. My father was a quiet man; but, he was also a man who knew how to communicate with his children. There was no communication gap in our home; we knew exactly what he meant when he spoke. Once, several years after I had left home, graduated from college and seminary, and become pastor of a church, my sister Linda told me about a guest speaker who spoke in my home church. At some point, the visiting preacher announced that Jesus had appeared at the foot of his bed and he sat up and talked with him. Then, after the visit, the man said that he “laid back down and went back to sleep.”

As soon as they got in the car and started home, Linda asked, “Daddy what do you think about what

he said about seeing Jesus?” Daddy said, “He was lying.”

Linda, surprised at the blunt answer, probed a little deeper, “You don’t think Jesus came and stood at the foot of his bed?” Daddy said, I am not saying that he didn’t see Jesus, but if he said he laid back down and went to sleep he was lying.”

When I was a student at Mississippi College, I visited the Hinds County Jail in Jackson every week for almost three years. Then, I decided to stop by the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman to see if I could interview the chaplain for a term paper I was writing. I discovered that the chaplain was from my hometown and that two of his nieces had taught me in highschool. Before I left, Chaplain Roscoe Hicks asked me if I would like to preach at various camps. The first time I went to Parchman there were two other volunteers, airmen from the Greenville Air Base, which was later closed. These men seemed confident and experienced - a lot more experienced than I! The chaplain told us which camps to go to and ask the officer to let him preach to those who wanted to hear us. After a couple of visits Chaplain Hicks said, “Any time you get here and I am not here, just go to any camp you want to and tell them I sent you.” For the next year, I would stop by, visit with the prisoner assigned to help the chaplain, and then pick a camp and to and preach to the men. I never did ask why it was I who was given this privilege, and not the two young men who seemed (on the surface) to have been a better choice. That the chaplain had his reasons I have no doubt.

CONCLUSION, 2 John 12-13

MANY THINGS TO WRITE. *“Though I have many things to write to you, I don’t want to do so with paper and ink. Instead, I hope to be with you and talk face to face so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister send you greetings.”* This is a very brief epistle from the aged Apostle to the “elect lady.” Whether the term referred to a lady or a church, John’s love and desire to talk face to face to face is understandable.

PAPER. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes state that “Paper” refers to a leaf of papyrus prepared for writing. Some biblical scholars suggest that this epistle could have been written on a single sheet of papyrus” [BSB].

OUR JOY. John writes “that our joy” may be complete rather than “ that your joy may be complete.” From this we may infer that he includes both himself and his reader (or readers). This reminds us of Paul’s emphasis on the joy that is available to spirit-filled believers.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

ADDRESS AND GREETING, 3 John 1-2

1. The writer is John the “elder.” (See Introduction to 1 John)
2. The person addressed is Gaius, a faithful Christian layman.
3. The author expresses his love for Gaius whom he loves “in truth”.

1:1 - GAIUS. *“To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in truth.”* This Third Epistle of John, like 2 John is addressed an individual, rather than a church. However, since no other information is offered, we do not now which Gaius was the recipient of this epistle. Paul mentions three men with this name. They are Gaius of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14), Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29), Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4). It is doubtful, however, that this Gaius is the same as either of those. We may agree with Robertson in his notes about the three individuals mentioned in this epistle:

It is possible that in 3Jn 1:9 there is an allusion to II John and, if so, then both letters went to individuals in the same church (one a loyal woman, the other a loyal man). Three persons are sharply sketched in III John (Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius). Gaius is the dependable layman in the church, Diotrephes the dominating official, Demetrius the kindly messenger from Ephesus with the letter, a vivid picture of early church life and missionary work. John is at Ephesus, the last of the apostles, and with an eagle's eye surveys the work in Asia Minor. The same Gnostic deceivers are at work as in the other Johannine Epistles. Pergamum is described in Rev 2:13 as the place "where Satan's throne is" [ATR, Word Pictures in the NT].

WHOM I LOVE. Or, beloved. This verbal adjective is used four times of Gaius in this short letter (here, and in 1:2, 5, 11). The same phrase, “whom I love in truth,” is found in 2 John 1:1. There is a bond of godly love that exists between true, spirit-filled believers that the world cannot fully comprehend. That statement requires some commentary. I grew up on stories of heroism because I grew up during (and during the years following WW II). Veterans told us stories of young men who sacrificed themselves for their countries and for their fellow soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. We heard stories about the young soldier who threw himself on a grenade to save his buddies. There were many stories of man who died for others.

We called those who survived the war heroes. They said, “I am not a hero. The real heroes are still on Iwo Jima, Okinawa, or in a grave in France. I checked out Volume II of Oliver North’s *WAR STORIES* on 14 CDs before driving to Glorieta, NM for the 2006 meeting of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources. I ended up listening to Bible studies and lectures on Creation on an MP-3 disc going and coming, but when I returned I began listening to *WAR STORIES*. I would rec-

commend that to anyone who needs an injection of patriotism which seems to be running a little low with some people today.

For months, I have prayed for Major Andy Shoffner, keeping up with him through his father, General Dutch Shoffner (RET). Major Shoffner is committed to his men, he is committed to his country, and he is committed to his family. Without a doubt, he is committed to close personal friends. Let me stress that Major Shoffner says that he returned from his first tour of duty in Iraq because of the prayers of Christians. At the same time, I would like to point out that even a well adjusted lost person loves (1) his wife, (2) his family, (3) his close personal friends, (4) his country, and (5) if he is in the army, his fellow soldiers. Sadly, there are professing Christians who are lacking in some of those areas. There are a lot of church members who are seriously lacking in these areas.

The love of which John writes is a love that only a true Christian can appreciate, and that applies only to a mature, spirit-filled Christian. Not all Christians love their families as they should. Not all believers love their country as they should. There is nothing that turns a lost person off more than a back-biting, back-stabbing, cynical, gossiping church member with an attitude. When some young people leave home they can testify to the fact that the meanest people they have ever known have been certain church members. A spirit-filled believer is never jealous, envious, covetous, or vindictive. That expresses the negative side of love; John is an example of the positive side of godly love.

1:2 - DEAR FRIEND. *“Dear friend, I pray that you may prosper in every way and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.”* This is the greeting we would expect from the elderly apostle to one who has been faithful to the Lord and to John. In the First Epistle of John, I made an effort to distinguish between romantic love, love for family love for the people you should naturally love (Romans 1), close personal friendship, and the godly love we know as *agape*’ love. The love that is commanded repeatedly by our Lord is *agape*’, a mental attitude love that can be commanded because it is directed by the mind. It will involve the emotions, but it is primarily a love that seeks God’s highest good for others. Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit (who is the divine Author of this Scripture) to write, in that great love chapter, I Corinthians 13 about some of the characteristics of love:

“Love is patient; love is kind. Love does not envy; is not boastful; is not conceited; does not act improperly; is not selfish; is not provoked; does not keep a record of wrongs; finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4-7, HCSB).

IN GOOD HEALTH. There is no reason to force Paul’s meaning by this term (sound teaching (1Tim. 1:10; 1Titus 6:3) here. John expresses his desire for good physical health and just as he prays that “your soul prospers.” We should pray both for the physical and spiritual health of fellow believers. John prays that his friend “may prosper in every way.” We should pray that our friends will prosper spiritually, socially, economically and in relationships, both within the church and with others.

I. GAIUS WAS A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN LAYMAN, 3-8.

1. John Describes Gaius' general conduct, 3-4.

1:3 - WALKING IN THE TRUTH. *“For I was very glad when some brothers came and testified to your [faithfulness] to the truth that you are walking in the truth.”* Gaius appropriated truth in mind and heart (3a), and he manifested truth in life and conduct (3b). “The evidence of Gaius’ spiritual vitality has come to the author through the testimony of other believers. Specifically, Gaius has shown hospitality to itinerant Christian ministers (vv. 5-8) [BSB].

John wrote to the “elect lady” in the Second Epistle of John:

“I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, in keeping with a command we have received from the Father. 5 So now I urge you, lady, not as if I were writing you a new command, but one we have had from the beginning that we love one another. 6 And this is love: that we walk according to His commands. This is the command as you have heard it from the beginning: you must walk in love” (2 John 1:4-6).

Obviously, Gaius walked with the Lord in truth (sound doctrine), as did the “elect lady.” Walk implies a continuous or habitual walk. One of the special friends whom I remember from home was an African American (who would have been confused if you had called him that!). Garfield Ellis was our neighbor and no one could have had a better neighbor. When my parents were ill, even though they had moved into town from the farm, members of the Ellis family visited often. My brother James and I still receive calls from Garfield’s surviving son and daughter.

When I was a younger teenager, my parents often went to check on my maternal grandmother, about two hours away. I stayed home to feed livestock and to keep an eye on the farm. The nearest neighbor was Garfield Ellis, so I would often walk across to visit him. One day we were talking when one of us mentioned a neighbor. Garfield said, “I call them sometime people. Sometimes they are this way and sometimes they are that way.

Unfortunately, there are church members who may well be called “sometime people.” That term should never be applied to the child of God. The true believer walks habitually in the truth. There is no wonder that John rejoiced in his friend’s commitment to the Lord.

1:4 - NO GREATER JOY. *“I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”* Gaius’s general conduct brought joy to the heart of the aging apostle. When I was talking with my publisher about my commentary on Philippians, I told him I had an idea for a title: *PHILIPPIANS: The Epistle of Joy*. Like so many other ideas I have come up with that one got shot down very quickly. The editor said, “Johnny, joy is a feminine word. Women will buy a book with joy in the title; men won’t.” I changed the title to *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble* (see PastorLife.Com web site). However, I still treated joy as I had intended in the book. For example, I wrote on page 24:

Millions are seeking peace today, but they will never find it anywhere except in the Prince of Peace. Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker, or read the words on a church sign: NO JESUS, NO PEACE; KNOW JESUS, KNOW PEACE. Let me try to adapt that to this Scripture - there is

No joy without peace,
No peace without grace,
No grace without Jesus.

I well remember when I first heard a New Testament professor explain the difference between joy and happiness. The truth was completely different from the impression I had when I was a teenager. Happiness is based on the Old English word happenstance. In other words, your happiness depends upon circumstances. We may be happy after visiting our friend to see the new baby. We are excited for them, congratulate them, and leave a gift. Then, as we leave, someone arrogantly cuts us off when we try to get into the right lane to get onto the Interstate.

Circumstances change and our happiness goes out the window, at least temporarily. Joy is not dependant upon circumstances. Paul knew great joy in the midst of persecution. I have know great joy even while being attacked by people who pretended to be my friends. That joy came with the realization that I did not have to defend myself because of supporters who not only believed me, they spoke up for me. We do not lose our joy when we lose a job, encounter opposition, or attend services for a loved-one who dies in the Lord.

2. Gaius showed hospitality to itinerant missionaries, 5-8.

1:5 - SHOWING YOUR FAITH. *“Dear friend, you are showing your faith by whatever you do for the brothers, and this you are doing for strangers.”* His love was manifested in hospitality to others. In the vernacular of the street today, if you are going to talk the talk, you should walk the walk. Someone described some church members when he said, “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying.”

Gaius was John’s dear friend and one might infer from the statements made about him that other members of this local church would consider him a dear friend. He showed his faith in relationships, both within the church and with strangers. Paul had been inspired to write to Timothy, his son in the ministry, “You should be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12b).

1:6 - SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY. *“They have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.”* Mutual friends had told John of Gaius’ ministry in his church. He loved his church and those who knew him were well aware of it. A young man was aware of the animosity between two ladies in his choir. He had only been a member of the church for a few years but the ladies had grown up in the church. One lady said, “She and I love each other, but....” He stopped her and said, “You don’t love each other! You can’t stand each

other.” His minister of music asked the pastor once; “Do you know what’s wrong with our choir? We have choir members who can’t stand each other. They just barely tolerate each other.” A minister of music once asked me, “Do you know what’s wrong with our choir?” I assured him I did. He asked, “What?” I said, “Too many chiefs and not enough Indians.” He thought a minute and said, “You are right.”

Wouldn’t you like to hear John’s comments on members like that? Wouldn’t you like to hear Gaius comment on them?

Gaius is praised for sending missionaries on their journey. John’s meaning would have been obvious to Gaius, and it does not stretch the mind too much to understand that John is complimenting his friend on receiving missionaries and then sending them on their way with his prayers, encouragement, and we would assume, some financial help. Gaius did not do this reluctantly but in a manner worthy of the Lord.

1:7 - THE NAME. *“Since they set out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from pagans.”* The missionaries depended upon believers and wisely refused to accept anything from pagans. There were people who used religion to take advantage of people. Sadly, that is still going on, even in America, as certain televangelists beg for money, knowing that some, especially the more ignorant among us, will send their tithes to a television personality who specializes in the spectacular.

Gaius’ love was shown in the way he aided missionaries. He received ministers and others into his home. He also gave financial aid to the missionaries (the responsibility of Christians, not the lost).

II. DIOTREPES WAS A HINDRANCE, DEMETRIUS A BLESSING, 9-12.

1. Diotrepes loved first place in the church, 9-11.

1:9 - DIOTREPES. *“I wrote something to the church, but Diotrepes, who loves to have first place among them, does not receive us.”* I still like the KJV, “he loveth preeminence.” Diotrepes means nourished by Zeus, the supreme god of the ancient Greeks. Diotrepes created a lot of trouble for the church. This man wanted to be supreme, run the church, and rule everyone else. He loved to have preeminence. To some, this may only be an historical footnote concerning some self-centered church member back at the end of the first century. In one of the studies in The Bible Notebook series, as I wrote about demons, I asked the question, “Where have all the demons gone?” Where have they gone. There must be as many demons in the world today as there were in Jesus’ day, so why do we not see them? My conclusion then, and now, is that they are here and they are active. We do not see them because we do not see all Jesus saw. We do not see them because we have psychological and sociological terms for all kinds of behavior problems, some of which may well be demon possession, demon obsession, or demon influence in some other way.

Where have all the Diotrepes types gone? Most pastors can provide us with an example. Let me create a hypothetical Diotrepes as an example. An intelligent, ambitious, and highly qualified young man moves to a new community. We will call him Bill. Bill catches the eye of the Nominating Committee and he finds himself teaching a Sunday School Class. Because he is an outstanding

teacher, he is asked to serve on a committee or two. In time, he is a deacon, chairman of the Nominating Committee, and anxious to be deacon chairman. Before long, he controls the nominations, the budget, pastor search committees, music committees, and the building and grounds committee. At first, he is amazed at all his positions and works to do an outstanding job in all of them. The people are appreciative of his work. Ten years later, he still controls all those major committees and runs the church from his Sunday School class and the deacons meetings. In time, the pastor and staff become like his employees and if anyone shows resistance he does not last very long. He is not afraid of open confrontation because he is prepared for it.

You wonder why a person would want to control a church in that way. You wonder if it is possible for one to gain such control of a church in this manner. You may look at Diotrephes - or better yet, talk with some pastors around today. One sincere church member assured his new pastor, "They will run it or ruin it." He had in mind one man and his enablers. The pastor thought the man might have been paranoid but after a few years realized, "He was not paranoid, they really were out to get him!"

1:10 - I WILL REMIND HIM. *"This is why, if I come, I will remind him of the works he is doing, slandering us with malicious words. And he is not satisfied with that! He not only refuses to welcome the brothers himself, but he even stops those who want to do so and expels them from the church."* Diotrephes fought John and opposed his work. He did not receive or aid the Lord's servants. To make matters worse, he prevented others from giving to mission causes and from receiving missionaries.

Two points should be stressed here. First, there are men and women in churches today who, like Diotrephes, love to have first place in the church. A person like this might be discovered when there is a motion to begin a rotation system for deacons, or ask deacons to assume a ministry to families within the church. Suddenly, the pastor and others discover that one of the deacons does not want to serve others, he feels called to run the church. Rotation of deacons is more than he can stand.

The second point is that a Diotrephes must be dealt with before he gains total control of a church. John had apostolic authority to deal with Diotrephes, and he assures the church that he will deal with him. The pastor may be called on to deal with a Diotrephes when he moves to a new church, or after seeing a person move to take control of the church.

A number of years ago, I mentioned a small problem I had been forced to deal with to a close friend, Bob Moore, who has been one our deacons at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Nederland, Texas. I had met with our Nominating Committee and one of the deacons suggested that a man who had left the church, and only recently returned, should be given a class. I quickly reminded the committee that the class he mentioned already had a teacher and the members wanted to keep him. That ended the discussion at the meeting. When I told Bob about this, he said, "Johnny, your deacons should never have let you get into that situation. Not one of them had his job on the line. You did." He stressed that the deacons should protect the pastor from people like Diotrephes. When they refused to do it, the pastor may well have to deal with it and they suffer the consequences. At such a time, the pastor should pray for guidance and proceed very carefully. It often helps to seek advice from those who know the situation (and the Diotrephes) better than he does.

1:11 - DO NOT IMITATE EVIL. *“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.”* John exhorts his friend to do what is good, in contrast to Diotrephes, whose work is evil. People bring evil into the church in various forms. With some it may be immorality, but with others it may well be the sin of Diotrephes, self-love; a self-centered attitude toward everything they do. One older minister commented on a deacon in a church I served, “He’s just like a rattlesnake. If you don’t ever cross his path you are all right, but if you ever cross him he will strike.” He was well known for power plays. One middle-aged lady said, “When he looks at me, I just shake.” That is evil.

A new pastor was warned of some people in his new church who were like Diotrephes. He said, “They will run it or ruin it.” He might have thought the man was paranoid, but he just didn’t seem the type. He genuinely loved his church and he wanted to help the new pastor.

2. Demetrius is commended for his faithfulness, 12.

1:12 - A GOOD TESTIMONY. *“Demetrius has a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. And we also testify for him, and you know that our testimony is true.”* Demetrius, in contrast to Diotrephes, had a good testimony from all the church, from his doctrinal integrity, and from John himself. They would never question John’s testimony.

In the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), Jesus commands us to win lost people and then disciple them. The idea there in discipline is not punishment, but training. Our goal in discipleship training should be to nurture and develop a Demetrius type church member and weed out those who show the traits of a Diotrephes.

Francis Schaeffer was one of the most remarkable men the Twentieth Century produced. As a matter of fact, he was not the product of the Twentieth Century; he was the product of the Holy Spirit. Part of his genius was in making an application of the Scripture in many and various fields, from science, to art, to music, to the culture in general. I once spent a considerable amount of time with Dr. Sam Gore when he was the Head of the Art Department at Mississippi College. One of the subjects that day was what Francis Schaeffer had written about the various forms of art and the training necessary for the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They had sculptors, goldsmiths, silversmiths, and people who worked with wood and fabric. When the time came, God had prepared craftsmen, all of who had been trained by the Egyptians in the schools for artisans in the Valley of Kings. They had all the materials they needed because the Egyptians had finally given them all the materials they would need to get them to leave!

In his letters, Schaeffer often reminded us that we are living in a fallen world and we should never be surprised at what fallen man will do. Diotrephes is an example of what fallen man can do, even in the church. Demetrius is an example of what God can do with a fallen man who humbly submits to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the divine Author of every word of Scripture. “Diotrephes will sow division and discord. Demetrius will sow the seed peace and joy in God’s church. Gaius was a man of God. He loved the Lord and served Him through His church. Gaius needs co-workers like

Demetrius, but deliver him from a Diotrephes.

I had been contacted by a pastor search committee and had met twice with a well prepared committee before I was invited to preach at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Nederland, Texas. My wife and I drove to Nederland and when she was settled into the hotel room, Bob Moore and Thurman Levins, two members of the search committee, picked me up and gave me a tour of the church and the community. I had been favorably impressed with this committee. I learned that their most recent pastor, George Clark, had resigned to accept the position of editor of *The Church Administration Magazine* for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, now LifeWay Christian Resources. They never told me that George had trained this committee but his leadership was evident.

At one point as we were driving through the area, I commended them on the way they represented their church. Bob Moore said, "I appreciate that, but I want you to know that our church could have elected a lot of people who would have done just as good a job, if not better than we are." One day, after I became his pastor, I mentioned another committee member, Vernon Greenville, to Bob. Bob said, "I love and respect Vernon Greenville. In fact, while we were looking for a pastor, if the Lord had called Vernon Greenville to preach I would have voted for him for my pastor." In time, I would learn that if you wanted to know exactly what Bob Moore thought, ask him. If you didn't want to know what he thought, don't ask! He tried to avoid being controversial. He sought to protect the peace, harmony, and fellowship of his church, but he would tell you exactly what he thought. He placed great value on honesty and integrity.

One hardly needs to ask which individuals in this church to which John is writing Bob Moore, Thurman Levins, and Vernon Greenville mirror. They remind me of Gaius and Demetrius, and they stand in marked contrast to a Diotrephes most pastors can recall. "Demetrius seeks to serve, a Diotrephes seeks to be served. "Gaius seeks the Lord's will, a Diotrephes seeks his own way.

CONCLUSION OF THIRD JOHN, 5:13-14

The conclusion of this little later is simply a farewell to the believers:

"I have many things to write you, but I don't want to write to you with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be with you. The friends send you greetings. Greet the friends by name."

The three epistles of John were written to show the believer how he may find real joy in his salvation (1 John 1:4), to encourage him to avoid sin (1 John 2:1), and to give the believer a series of tests by which he may prove his faith.

No book in the Bible offers greater assurance than 1 John and no book affirms more the need to live a life that is consistent with the profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments," (1 John 2:3).

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